



Title Developing a strategy to address low youth
 education attendance in Malawi

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**DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS LOW YOUTH EDUCATION
ATTENDANCE IN MALAWI**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the youth of the Republic of Malawi.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS LOW YOUTH EDUCATION ATTENDANCE IN MALAWI

MICHAEL B. USI

Abstract

This study explores the complex factors that contribute to low youth education attendance in Malawi. While current education and youth policy is framed in terms of providing access to quality education for all Malawians, this has proved challenging to implement in practice.

A qualitative approach involving a range of stakeholders was adopted. 341 respondents participated in one-to-one and group interviews and provided in-depth insights into the issues affecting educational attendance. Data was thematically coded using NVivo and network analysis was used to determine the complexity of the interrelationships of the factors undermining youth attendance.

Human capital theory (HCT) underpins the design of the study and the analysis of the data collected; however, HCT alone was insufficient to account for patterns in the data and therefore post-colonial, women's empowerment, motivation, decentralization, corruption and media development theories were used to complement and extend HCT in the analysis undertaken. Furthermore, while, in HCT, education and training are considered strategies for empowering people to make informed choices, enter employment and contribute to personal and national development, a central concern of the Malawian education system is the preparation of young people, and particularly young women, to undertake traditional roles.

This study demonstrates that youth, especially young women in rural settings, face many challenges to their remaining in education and achieving employment outcomes beyond traditional expectations. This also limits the potential for wider-ranging social changes and economic development. Examples provided illustrate how sector-wide patterns of educational resourcing and provision, organisational issues, teacher and learner attitudes, and cultural practices interact.

Policy formation and evaluation in Malawi are driven by external funder priorities and political expediency rather than being evidence-based. This study, contrastingly, offers an empirical basis for policy formation and decision-making vis-a-vis youth education, and proposes a strategic plan to improve levels of education attendance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACB	Anti-Corruption Bureau
AfriMAP	Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AL	Adult Literacy
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
FAL	Functional Adult Literacy
FGSs	Focus Group Sessions
FPE	Free Primary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
IPOR	Institute of Public Opinion and Research
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
Ltd	Limited

LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoESC	Ministry of Education Sports and Culture
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneers
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NEP	National Education Policy
NEP	National Education Profile
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
NYC	National Youth Council
NYCM	National Youth Council of Malawi
NYP	National Youth Policy
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PE	Primary Education
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
UK	United Kingdom

UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlement
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific Commission
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNIMA	University of Malawi
UoBS	University of Bedfordshire
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study. The background, context, problem statement, main and specific objectives, justification, research questions, definitions of terms underpinning the study and also the summary of each chapter presented. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the thesis.

1.0 Background

This study investigates the underlying causes of low youth education attendance in Malawi. The term ‘youth’ in this study refers to pupils and students in primary and secondary schools, college and university; it also refers to their counterparts not attending education. The Malawi Government defines ‘youth’ as individuals in the age range of 10–35 years (Malawi Government, 2013). There are, however, individuals attending education whose age range falls outside the definition but are discussed as youth in this study.

Based on the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), the problem of low youth education attendance in Malawi is well known and enduring (NESP, 2008–17 and MIE, 2014–19). According to MIE (2014–19), previous education policies have failed to address the problem while Kadzamira (2006) and Hango (1994–2003) argue that Malawi is still struggling to address this problem. Based on Hauya (1993) and the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) (2009–13), the current education sector challenges date back to the pre-colonial era and subsequent post-colonial policies have failed because they are either narrow in focus or are not comprehensively informed. The arguments advanced by Hauya and ESIP agree with the analysis of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology- MoEST and UNESCO (2008) that show that Malawi has been replicating previous failed policies in its subsequent policies. Although various education policies argue that the vision of the MoEST policy is for education to be a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and voiceless, the policy activities are not coherent with the aspirations listed. Based on the narratives of the current education policy (NESP, 2008–17) it is difficult to ascertain that research or evaluations were used to inform its formulation. Furthermore, activities in the ESIP (2009–13) and NESP (2008-17) appear insufficient to address the problem of low attendance despite recognising that Malawi still has one of the world’s lowest enrolments

in school and university education (National Education Profile 2014). One common feature of the education policies is that they focus on general problems such as impact of poor infrastructure on education attendance without further exploration of underlying causes. Based on Weiss (2011) and Dillo (2010), failure to address underlying causes leads to partial addressing of the problems.

This study assumes that failure to identify and detail underlying causes for the problem of low education attendance in Malawi is the reason for the continued challenges rocking the education sector as subsequent action plans could be misplaced. This study therefore attempts to establish the underlying causes. Based on the Ministry of Education and Sports for Uganda (2015) and Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education for Zambia (2014), the problem of low education attendance is not only unique to Malawi as Uganda and Zambia are also struggling with similar problems. Apart from potential strategies for addressing the problems emerging from this study, this study has also sourced best approaches from other countries for dealing with similar problems in the Malawi context.

1.1 Brief history of Malawi

Malawi lies in the south east of Africa, bordering Tanzania to the north east, Mozambique to the southeast and south, and Zambia to the southwest. Malawi, then called Nyasaland, was a British colony from 1894 to 1963 when she became independent under Dr. Kamuzu Banda as the first post independent president (Phiri, 2010; Pachai, 1973). According to Phiri, Malawi was part of the colonial amalgamation of three countries (federation), namely Northern Rhodesia now called Zambia and Southern Rhodesia now called Zimbabwe. According to Kayuni (2011), the capital for both political and commercial business for the three countries was Salisbury, now Harare, in Zimbabwe. Kayuni quotes Williams (1978:156) arguing that Malawi depended on Southern Rhodesia to finance its public services. Malawi's GDP is estimated at approximately US\$224 per capita and 90% of Malawi's economy is based on agriculture (World Bank – Trading Economics, 2015). The influence of colonialism on the post-colonial Malawi and other African countries in the region is discussed comprehensively in post-colonial theory in section 2.1.2.

Malawi became a democracy in 1994 under Dr. Bakili Muluzi and development has not been significant (World Bank – Trading Economics, 2015).

According to Hauya (1993) and NESP (2008-17), the Malawi education system is struggling to address the needs of the Malawians as it continues to be influenced by the effects of the colonial education system of 1926 which assumed a centralised curriculum for all schools in 1933.

In order to appreciate the current challenges that the Malawi education sector is experiencing, it is necessary that the history of education in Malawi is overviewed.

1.2 History of the Malawi education systems

This section explores various education systems that have been implemented in Malawi from the pre-colonial rule to the present. The history of the education systems in Malawi can be categorized into missionary, colonial and post-colonial systems. The post-colonial education system is presented in two sections; the first and second independent Malawi education systems.

1.2.1 Missionary education system in Malawi (1873–1891)

Formal education in Malawi, then called Nyasaland, was first introduced by white missionaries who came to Malawi to introduce Christianity in 1873 (Lambert, 2011; Phiri, 1990). According to Lambert and Phiri, the main objective for the introduction of formal education was to train natives of Nyasaland to read and write so that they could facilitate the establishment of Christianity. The missionary education system adopted different curriculum programmes in their mission stations (Chirwa and Naidoo, 2014). This means that there were different curricula being used in Malawi schools. According to Banda (1982), one significant problem of the missionary education that has negatively affected the quality of the present education system is rote learning methods. Banda appears to suggest that critical thinking was not considered necessary during the missionary era. Rote teaching does not help in creating critical minds as required in modern times (Banda, 2003; Nudelman, 2011).

The establishment of schools around mission stations meant that people living far from the mission stations could not attend the schools due to distance. Another reason for failure to attend school was that only Christians were admitted in the schools (Ng'ambi, 2010). This study argues that Christianity bias and distances between schools contributed to the exclusion of some individuals from attending education. Since ESIP (2009–13) argues that distance between schools is still a

deterrent factor for youth to attend and attain education, this study argues that the education sector is faced with enduring problems. This could also mean that the problems are not easy to fix and therefore may take time to address.

Since there was no political government (Phiri, 2010), it would seem that the missionary education system was guided by policies governing the Christian religion. Moreover, there is no evidence found in this study that indicates that the missionary education system had any other objectives than the establishment of Christianity. This study argues that the missionary education was not framed to address the needs of the majority population.

The missionary education system was later replaced by the colonial system.

1.2.2 Colonial education system in Malawi (1891–1963)

Banda (1982) argues that the British colonial government improved the education system and curriculum that were introduced by the missionaries, to include some subjects such as Arts and Crafts that would facilitate national development. However, the objective of the colonial government was to educate a small population to acquire skills such as clerical and accounting in order to serve the colonial bureaucracy as stated by Ng'ambi (2010) in a discussion paper – 'Effective Delivery of Public Education Services in Malawi'. There were also significant regional differences in the accessibility of educational opportunities and in people's responses to education. For example, although there was some improvement in the availability of schools, such institutions were sparsely located making it hard for some youth to attend and attain education. According to Banda (2008), the colonial education system was also linked to colonial dominance over Malawians; the education attendance by native Africans was low especially during the independence movement probably because of the possible resentment of the colonial education by Africans.

Just like the missionary education, the colonial education also prohibited some natives from attending education. Arguably, distances between schools and the agenda of the colonial government contributed to the problem of low education attendance. Phiri (2010) argues that the colonial education system was guided by a set of regulations such as restricting the number of people attending education in order to protect the interest of the white settlers in Malawi. This

study argues that just like the missionary education, the colonial education system also excluded the majority of the population to serve the interest of the colonial masters. The colonial government was replaced by the first independent Malawi Government in 1964.

1.2.3 First independent Malawi education system (1964–1993)

President Dr. Banda, a Western-educated physician, included the expansion of education opportunities for all Malawian children (Banda, 1982) in his post-independence goals. Under the single party system of government, Malawi made some significant reforms in the education sector which exist to date. For example, basic education comprised three main components; early childhood development (ECD), adult literacy (AL) including out of school youth literacy, and primary education (PE). In Malawi, however, basic education is synonymous with primary education, ECD is thought of as infant care and support, adult literacy and out of school youth is non-formal education. According to ESIP (2009–13), the formal education system in Malawi follows an 8–4–4 structure: 8 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of university education. In primary education, pupils graduate with the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE), which determines their eligibility for entry into secondary school. Public secondary school students attend either Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs); previously called Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) or Conventional Secondary Schools (CSSs). In the second year of secondary school education, students sit for the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE), which is followed by the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) two years later. Tertiary education is provided by an array of education institutions including primary and secondary teacher training colleges, technical and vocational training schools, and university colleges.

Primary education, pre-school education and non-formal education initiatives such as adult literacy, fall into the category of basic education. According to the Malawi Education Management Information Systems (EMIS, 2013), the purpose of education is to equip people with basic knowledge and skills to allow them to function as competent and productive citizens in a free society. Arguably, the first independent Malawi government therefore introduced the education that would create human capital. Although in the independent Malawi, the government introduced some strategic and significant reforms in the education sector, education was restricted. For example, critical thinking leading to inquiry was prohibited (Sturges, 1998). Sturges further argues

that education was the key to Banda's broader economic and bureaucratic patronage system and central to the maintenance of social, economic, and political equality. According to Sturges, by 1998, post-secondary school education was only available to 0.3% of primary school graduates. Only 50% of the age group eligible for primary school were admitted. Secondary schools only served 5% of the primary graduates and tertiary education served only 1% because of space (Government of Malawi, 2010).

Another factor that contributed to low attendance was that primary and secondary education demanded fees which were too high for most local Malawians (UNESCO, 2004). The National Education Sector Plan (NESP), which is a policy framework for the Malawi education sector, states that Malawi has an education access rate of 17% for a form 1 class due to limited infrastructure (Education Sector Implementation Plan-ESIP, 2009–13:17).

This study argues that although the first independent Malawi education system considered the creation of human capital, it did so with minimal effect as the numbers attending education were significantly lower than those excluded. Sturges (1998) suggests that the government instead promoted farming to produce cash crops for exports and exported male migrant labour to South Africa. By providing Malawians with sources of income, the first independent government managed to keep the population at a steady rate up to 1993 when a multiparty system of government was introduced.

1.2.4 Second Independent Malawi Education System (1994–2015/7)

Hango (1994–2003) argues that the ushering in of a democratic government in 1994 provided new opportunities to improve the Malawi education system. Hango further argues that the needs of Malawians were considered in the reformation of the education sector. One of the major developments in Malawi education history was the introduction of free primary education (FPE). According to Hango (1994–2003:2), the Joint Declaration of Universal Primary Education For All (EFA), coupled with the revelations in the World Bank report as discussed in ESIP (2009-13) that Malawi's public education spending was not targeting the poorest of the poor, influenced Dr. Bakili Muluzi, the Head of State then, to incorporate the plan of introducing FPE. According to Kunje et al. (2003), the introduction of free primary education in 1994 resulted in a sudden increase in pupil enrolment from 1.9 million to 3.2 million. Kunje et al. (2003) further argues that the government recruited 18,000 temporary teachers to alleviate the teacher shortage due to the

increase of learners. According to MoEST (2002), there were three critical problems that the new democratic government created, namely:

- Attempts to include in the curriculum issues of democracy and human rights brought in by the new government in 1994, led to duplication and redundant content.
- The new government did not continue with the orientation of teachers on the new curriculum, such that teachers implemented Standards 4 to 8 without being oriented.
- The recruitment of the 18,000 temporary teachers into the primary schools compromised the quality of curriculum delivery as the temporary teachers lacked pedagogical content knowledge.

The introduction of FPE has not come without misgivings as Chileshe et al. (2007) and Kadzamira (2006) disqualify FPE as a strategy for addressing poverty. Moreover, its objective is to increase literacy as argued in the ESIP (2009–13). However, the Government of Malawi census (2008) argues that there is a link between poverty levels and education levels. The question that the Malawi government has not addressed is whether the FPE policy has been an effective strategy in reducing poverty and empowering people. Arguably, relevant policy and practice can be an effective tool for poverty reduction (Jackson, 2014).

Based on the discussion of the history of Malawi's education, it strongly appears that the problem of low education attendance is both historical and political. Currently, the Malawi education system is guided by the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) which covers the period from 2008 to 2017. The NESP, which is rolled out through the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP), provides an insight into the strategic plans of government for improving the education sector. NESP is part of the broader Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) of the Government of Malawi as discussed in chapter 2.

While Banda (2003) and the National Education Policy (2016) argue that there is significant progress made since 1994 in expanding access to basic education for both boys and girls and in moving towards the goal of Education for All, available statistics still show that the challenge of low attendance is critical. For instance, in 2010 the national statistics indicated that only 13% of children and young people aged 6–24 attended school (Government of Malawi, 2010:9). The ESIP which is an action plan of the NESP (2008-17) argues that 600,000 (11.8%) primary age children

are not enrolled in school and the completion rate of primary education is only 35%. Also, Malawi records the lowest university enrolment ratios in sub-Saharan Africa with just 52 per 100,000 inhabitants (NESP, 2008–17). Overall, the attendance in all the three levels of education is relatively low. According to the Education Management Information System which has not been reviewed since 2013 (EMIS, 2013), a total of 4,188,677 pupils enrolled in primary schools. Out of this population, only 256,343 students, representing 6.12% of the primary school enrolment were enrolled in secondary schools. Furthermore, the EMIS (2013) shows that only 12,203 students, representing 4.76% of the secondary school enrolment were registered in university colleges and that out of 242,016 standard 8 pupils who sat for upper primary examinations only 79,402 (32.8%) were admitted in secondary schools. This means that about 67.8% of the primary school pupils that sat for the examinations were excluded from secondary education in 2013. A critical analysis of the problem of education attendance reveals that females are more negatively affected compared to their male counterparts.

1.2.4.1 Girls' education: challenging cultural practices

“Culture” in this context refers to traditional practices that inhibit girls from attending education while “attendance” means enrolment and subsequent continued participation in class. According to Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011), the Government of Malawi (2013) and the ESIP (2009–13), culture is still a significant factor inhibiting female education attendance in Malawi. Furthermore, EMIS (2013) has indicated that youth, particularly females are unable to attend school due to the long distances they have to travel to get to school. Although the National Education Profile - NEP (2014) argues that Malawi has a better female primary enrolment at 144% than other countries in the region, NESP (2008-17) also argues that the numbers are significantly reduced at completion. This study focuses on education attendance from primary, secondary up to college and university education.

Rural girls are particularly affected negatively by cultural practices as they are obliged to undergo sexual rituals to ‘cleanse’ their bodies after graduating from initiation ceremonies (Chilimampunga, 2005, UNESCO, 2004 and Banda, 2003). Chilimampunga (2005) argues that girls are exposed to pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. Based on Chilimampunga's arguments this study further argues that some girls drop out of school due to early pregnancies and illnesses. One of the possible consequences of girls' dropping out of school

could be their disempowerment to support their children to attend education. Lichapa (2013) argues that a significant number of rural girls drop out of school because their mothers are uneducated and do not motivate their daughters to get educated. If this trend is not stopped, there could be a creation of a vicious cycle where subsequent un-educated generations do not support their children to attend education thereby missing the opportunity of empowering societies to develop. It is the argument of this study that this problem requires urgent strategic attention. Currently, it would appear that the education policy (NEP, 2016) pays little attention to the significant impact of culture on girls' education. The problem of culture on education attendance is not unique to Malawi as Zambia also experiences the same problem of low rural girl's education attendance (Chileshe et al., 2007 according to Zambia's Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education 2014). The ministry argues that there are disparities in education attendance between boys and girls; 14% more boys attend education than girls. Chileshe further argues that there are 34% more girls in urban areas attending education than their rural counterparts. The similarities of the Malawi education problems with neighbouring countries such as Zambia could make this study interesting beyond Malawi's borders.

There is hope that Malawi can address these cultural issues since Harcourt and Escobar (2013) argue that it is possible to effect some changes in some cultures. Furthermore, Ngan-Pun (2011) argues that China in a bid to align its culture with the globe, has integrated some foreign Western cultural practices such as youth personal freedom and independence. In the case of Malawi, it would be helpful if sustainable strategies to promote female education by getting the cultural issues out their way would be found and implemented. That said, it should also be noted that some aspects of Malawian culture are good for youth development and must not be tampered with. For example, almost all Malawian cultures advocate hard work, which is a good virtue for development. Moreover, O'Neil (2006) argues that culture shapes people's way of doing things.

1.3 Context of study

This study is about the problem of low education attendance among the youth of Malawi in urban and rural areas. The study also pays special attention to challenges inhibiting girls from excelling in education. This study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of underlying factors for the poor level of youth attendance in education. The need to improve youth education attendance and increase their participation in national development (social and economic spheres) is centre stage

in Malawi (NEP, 2016). This is evident in the passing of various policies and research in the education and youth sectors. For instance, the previous and current national youth policies have provided frameworks for enhancing youth attendance and participation as well as the development and implementation of youth programmes. Furthermore, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2008–17) sets out the government’s approach for increasing youth access to formal learning and achieving the national education goals and objectives. The introduction of the policies underlines the significance given to youth education attendance and their participation in national development.

The goals and objectives stipulated in NESP are: access and equity, quality and relevance, governance and management. The Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) highlights the implementing strategy for the NESP (NESP, 2008–17:9). Details of the ESIP are discussed in chapter 2 of the literature review. In Malawi primary education age ranges from 5 to 13 years, secondary is from 13 to 17 years while university education is usually completed by the age of 21. However, due to challenges faced by the youth in an attempt to get education, it may not be practical to enforce age limitations for attending education as ESIP (2013) suggests. Moreover, youth age definition varies, for example, Zambia, defines youth as individuals in the age range 15-24 years while Commonwealth Youth Programmes define youth from 15-29 years (Zambia National Youth Policy, 2015). There is provision for mature entrants in universities which provides an opportunity for continuation with education for individuals who did not attend university education or are attending postgraduate education. In either case, mature entrants’ provision makes up for the lost opportunities to attend university education. The current national youth policy defines youth as individuals in the 10–35 year age range. It states that response targeting and prioritisation of the needs of the citizens, particularly the youth and the most disadvantaged, in terms of engaging them in decision-making and developing their economic power is critical for the effective planning of education delivery systems.

1.4 The key problem

This study attempts to fill gaps that exist in the national education policy and strategy action plans which appear to have led to the failure to address the education attendance problem. The Malawi Education Monitoring Information System (EMIS, 2013) argues that some of the major factors for the low attendance of youth in education are unknown. Kadzamira and Rose (2003), Banda (2003)

and the Malawi and UNESCO (2007) report argue that Malawi needed to fulfil its goal of Education For All by 2015. However, according to the Malawi Education Policy (2016), NESP (2008-17), Hodal and Holder (2016), it is clear that the government failed to achieve that goal. Hodal and Holder further raises doubts about Malawi achieving the Sustainable Development Goal which is about provision of education to all by 2030. These arguments serve to warn that there is serious need for Malawi to find strategies to improve its education performance in general and to increase its education attendance in particular.

1.5 Objectives of the study

Objectives of the study are strategic outcomes that this study hopes to achieve.

1.5.1 Main objective

The overall objective of the study is to investigate further the known and the hidden factors affecting youth education attendance. The study also probes the various local cultures to establish how they directly or indirectly inhibit the youth from attending education especially among rural girls. Development of an education strategy to improve attendance is part of the main objective. The proposed education strategy seeks to respond to the current education policy gaps.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

In order to achieve the main objective, the study seeks to:

- a) Analyse the underlying factors affecting youth education attendance in rural and urban areas.
- b) Assess the effects of the education and youth policy strategies on youth attendance in education.
- c) Analyse the major challenges facing the implementation of education and youth policies.
- d) Explore possible solutions for improving education attendance.
- e) Develop strategies for improving youth education attendance.

1.6 Justification for the study

According to the University of Gothenburg: Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR, 2016) and the National Education Policy (2016), Malawi is struggling to address education sector

challenges. IPOR argues that Malawi has failed to achieve the universal primary education goal and that illnesses account for 54% of absenteeism that leads to drop outs and failure to pass examinations while school related issues such as school fees account for 31% of drop out. IPOR (2016) further argues that 24% of school drop outs are mere refusals to attend education. This study seeks to establish reasons for youth refusal to attend education as this will facilitate the design of relevant action plans to deal with the problem. NEP also acknowledges that Malawi is struggling to achieve access to quality education for all. Both the National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2008-17) and the National Education Policy (NEP, 2016) present causes of low youth education attendance simplistically without providing much detail that would lead to the identification of specific root causes. For example, the NESP only argues that the low enrolment in Malawi is due to drop-out without identifying and critically analysing the predisposing factors for the drop-out challenges.

This study is premised on the belief that increasing school, university and college enrolments would facilitate the empowerment of Malawians so that they have knowledge and skills for employment and making informed decisions for personal and national development as argued by Kronenberg (2015). This justification is based on lessons from Cuba which according to Kronenberg has an education system which has empowered the population and that Cuba offers Africa a model education system. Learning Cuba's education success story could help Malawi reshape and position Malawi's education system. Hudson and Akyeampong (2016:3) also argue that it is necessary to learn from what has been achieved so far and also from what has not worked out.

This research study attempts to respond to the need to fill gaps that exist in strategies to improve access to quality education for all by 2030.

The low education attendance threatens the process to empower Malawians so that they can participate in personal and national development. The exclusion of youth from education has led to high rural unemployment and poverty leading to urbanisation (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2009, Montgomery, 2009, and Malawi People, 2012). Kayuni and Tambulasi quote the United Nations Centre of Human Settlement (UNCHS, 2009) as stating that Malawi is one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world due to running away from poverty in the rural areas. Kayuni and Tambulasi

(2009) further estimate that Malawi will have 44% of its population living in urban areas by 2044. The urbanisation rate is at 5.6% of the annual growth of cities in Malawi (Malawi People, 2012). According to the NESP (2008-17) and National Education Policy (2016), the Malawi education sector is still struggling to achieve its priority areas such as quality; access and equitable basic education; access and quality secondary education and quality teacher education in primary and secondary schools; quality and equitably accessed technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training; quality and equitably accessed higher education and quality; quality and accessed open and distance learning. Education is also regarded as a means to discourage criminality, drug and alcohol abuse and other anti-social behaviours including civil unrest (NESP, 2008–17; McCullum, 2012; Chilimampungu, 2005; Palen, 2001 and Nsapato, 2010). According to Hango (2003), there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing young people in general and in accessing education in particular. Hango argues that development of a strategy for improving youth education attendance in education is critical. Young people constitute a significant percentage of the Malawi population, estimated to be 60 percent (Government of Malawi, 2013). The provision of skills through training in technical colleges is one good strategy for empowering the youth to participate in national development as argued by a CIET Report (2010–11), but training requires some form of basic education as a foundation to understand concepts of development. In order to respond to the problem of low youth education attendance, the study seeks to address four key gaps concerning youth education.

The first gap is that studies about youth education have focused on the general challenges facing the education sector. This study, by contrast, undertakes a comprehensive analysis of previous policy failures and factors influencing poor youth education attendance. An analysis of previous and current education policies reveal a trend that indicates there has been only partial analysis of problems earmarked for redress. Although this study focuses on Malawi, its results may benefit other countries, as Watters (2012); Sahni (2014); Nudelman (2011); Gullstrand (2009); Majoni (2014); Kiminza (2015) and the Global Initiative for out of school children in Zambia (2014) argue that other countries such as India, Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe are struggling with similar challenges.

The second gap relates to research methods and acting on research findings. Many studies in youth education and development tend to give little attention to policy strategies and qualitative approaches despite the analytical values inherent in these methods. There also is a low utilisation of relevant research information for improving youth education attendance as reflected in action plans such as the ESIP (2009–13). For example, a study by Banda (2003) and NESP (2008–17) that suggest that there is more allocation of resources per child in primary education than in the secondary and tertiary levels appear to be neglected in all education strategic action plans. Furthermore, a study by Ng’ambi (2010) suggests that the low allocation of financial resources to the secondary and tertiary levels has negatively impacted on the attendance of students is also not utilised in the education policy. Another piece of research information that is omitted in the current education policy is the role of families and communities in promoting education attendance. Joyce and Epstein (2002:308) argue that it is surprising that little research focuses on what schools can do to increase and sustain students' daily attendance, and even fewer studies explore how family–school–community partnerships may contribute to this goal. Since students spend their time in schools and communities where their families stay, it is imperative that the role of schools and communities (including families) in improving education attendance is well understood. Joyce and Epstein further argue that attendance improves when schools take comprehensive approaches to family and community involvement (2002:317). Contrary to the argument advanced by Joyce and Epstein, the Malawi Institute of Education Strategic Plan (2014–19), while listing a number of outputs in order to promote the quality of education for all, excludes the role of family and community partners. NESP (2008–17) is also not clear how families and communities would participate in improving quality education and attendance. There are also major differences between developed and developing countries in the way parents and communities influence education. In the west, as argued by Anderson and Mundy (2014), parents' involvement in firing teachers, informing curriculum and teaching their children enhances learning while in developing countries such as Malawi, high levels of illiteracy makes the participation of the majority of parents and communities impossible (Lichapa, 2013). This study has attempted to address this gap by exploring relevant roles that parents and communities can take in influencing youth attendance of education. The apparent neglect of research information by government and not learning from experiences from other countries has the potential of rendering education policies in Malawi less effective.

Thirdly, there is also justification from the point of view of the gaps in detail in policies. The in-depth analysis of low education attendance factors in the study is important for fine-tuning current education policy. It is expected that the findings will assist in the development of detailed and achievable policy guidelines to support the implementation of youth development strategies identified in this thesis. This study argues that the failures of the education sector have crippled the credibility of the education sector policy.

Fourthly, the previous youth development strategies are said to have failed partly because of the lack of a detailed study to bring out the lessons and feedback to confront the situation (ESIP, 2009–13). After more than a decade since the national youth policies were formulated, no substantive analysis of successes or failures of the policies have been carried out. This study seeks to address these gaps.

Finally, the study seeks to stimulate further elaborative and specific research in the areas that will provide best practice examples and ably contribute to youths' active participation in national development.

Increased education attendance could be a strategy to limit the oppression of the uneducated majority by the educated few.

1.7 Research questions

This research study focuses on the following main and subsidiary questions.

1.7.1 Main question

What are the underlying causes that contribute to low youth education attendance in Malawi?

1.7.2 Subsidiary questions

- How does the education sector policy strategy address the challenges of young people attending education?

- How has the national youth policy enhanced youth participation in national development?
- How has culture influenced the attendance of young people in education, especially girls?
- What can be done to improve youth education attendance?

1.8 Definitions of terms underpinning the study

In order to understand the context in which the terms underpinning this study are used, a definition of each of the terms is presented.

1.8.1 Youth and young people

The terms ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are used interchangeably in this thesis. The term ‘youth’ is the official description of young people in Malawi (Government of Malawi, 2013). The ‘youth’ age range was discussed under section 1.3.

1.8.2 Education attendance/school attendance

In this study, the term ‘education attendance’ covers primary, secondary, university and college education. The meaning includes sustained class attendance (EMIS, 2013).

1.8.3 Participation

According to ESIP (2009–13) and Filipovic (2010), ‘participation’ in the context of this study refers to an interactive communication between a learner and a teacher. It is an active engagement of the teacher and learner in a learning process so that the learner acquires reasoning and critical skills.

1.8.4 Education

In this study, ‘education’ strictly refers to formal education which comprises primary, secondary, university and college education.

1.8.5 Youth in and out of school

The term ‘youth in school’ refers to young people attending education while the term ‘youth out of school’ refers to those not attending formal education.

1.8.6 Development

According to Robbins (2003), Goel (2010) and Alba (2012), development is defined as a process of building the capacity of an individual through education so that one is able to actively participate in decision-making processes and national development programmes.

1.8.7 Inspection and monitoring

In the context of Malawi education and this study, inspection and monitoring generally means assessing and evaluating what goes on in an education institution, such as classrooms.

1.8.8 Overpopulation

The term ‘overpopulation’ is used in this study to mean ‘population boom’. It is a term used in Malawi literature and is commonly understood by Malawi society. For example, Ponder (2016), discusses “Family Planning and **Overpopulation** in Malawi” to mean **population boom** while the Media Population Centre (2014), writes about “Engaging Malawi Youth to Fight **Overpopulation**” to mean “fighting population boom”.

1.9 Organization of chapters

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the study. It presents the problem statement and the context of the study. The objectives and justification of the study are highlighted. The chapter ends by setting out the organization of the chapters and a summary.

In chapter two, the literature review is presented as guided by the objectives of the study. The theoretical and empirical perspectives are highlighted, as well as relevant studies relating to education and youth development, and theories underpinning the study.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology. It covers the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, and data collection tools and data analysis.

Chapter four delineates the findings of the study. The issues covered include what the study has established regarding: major factors affecting the attendance of youth in education; effects of the education and youth policy frameworks on youth attendance in education; major challenges facing

the implementation of education; and youth policy strategies for effective advocacy relating to youth education attendance.

In chapter five, major issues drawn from the findings are analysed and discussed in detail.

Finally, in chapter six, the major conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study are presented. An outline of the study's limitations as well as its contribution to knowledge is discussed.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, the context, problem statement, the main objective, as well as specific objectives and justification for the study are presented. Overall, the need to analyse factors impacting on youth education attendance and active participation in national development in Malawi cannot be over emphasised in view of the shortfalls and inconsistencies between policy and practice. Lessons learnt from best practices from other countries are part of the study as they inform recommendations of this study.

This doctoral study is an investigation of the hidden factors affecting the attendance of the youth in education in Malawi, and understanding the implications for national youth development. This study also further explores the already known factors influencing education attendance such as school, family, motivation, cultural and governance factors. As part of this study, there is a specific interest in the way in which Malawian culture directly or indirectly inhibits the youth especially girls from attending school in rural and urban areas. This study has attempted to elicit views from respondents regarding possible options for improving youth education attendance, as discussed in chapter 4.

The next chapter presents the literature review focusing on the conceptual framework guiding the main issues of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In order to have a broad understanding of developments surrounding the successes and challenges of youth education attendance, this chapter reviews both local and international literature on education sectors. The chapter also reviews the Malawi education and youth policy strategies for promoting youth education attendance. Theories underpinning the study as well as debates and criticisms associated with policy formulation and implementation are part of the literature review. Theories underpinning the study provide a framework for analysing data while the understanding of policy debates and criticisms is important as it informs the proposed education strategy that aims at improving education attendance in chapter 6.

While human capital theory is the main theory guiding this study, other theories: post-colonial, women's empowerment, motivation, decentralization, corruption and media development theories became necessary as justified in section 2.1 below.

2.1 Theories underpinning the study

Since this study focuses on youth empowerment through education, human capital theory is the main theory underpinning this study. However, due to the context of the Malawi's education sector as presented in NESP (2008-17) and NEP (2016) in section 2.2.1, the theory appears insufficient to guide this study in providing the framework necessary for analysing data and designing an education strategy that will facilitate the improvement of education attendance. Based on the perceived deficiency of the human capital theory, the following theories have been incorporated to complement the human capital theory; post-colonial, motivation, decentralization, corruption and media development theories. Relevance of these theories is discussed under sections presenting the theories.

2.1.1 Human capital theory

Based on Kronenberg (2015); Nnandi (2014); Fitzsimons (1999) and Marshal (1998), human capital theory argues that education and training empowers people with knowledge and skills for employment and making informed choices that contribute to personal and national development. According to Kronenberg (2015:3), Cuba's education system is the model for Africa and is

premised on the understanding that only good-quality, empowering education could conquer Cuba's acute poverty, ignorance and development. Kronenberg argues that Cuba has one of the highest education attendance records in the world; by the mid-1990s net primary admission was 99% for both girls and boys. Some of the benefits of the Cuban education system as argued by Kronenberg are capacity to address diseases and participation in national development. One feature characterising Cuba's education system is high investments in education. Nnandi argues that educated people make more productive workers than the uneducated. The significance of human capital theory in development is also demonstrated by Fitzsimons (1999) who argues that it is the most influential economic theory of Western education, setting the framework of government policies since the early 1960s. Fitzsimons (1999:1) further argues that throughout Western countries, education is a primarily economic device and that education and training is the key to participation in the new global economy. Agreeing with Fitzsimons, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008:157) argue that 'an educated population is a productive population and that investment in education has a positive correlation with economic growth and development'.

Although the Malawi education policy (NEP, 2016) appears to be informed by the human capital theory, there appears to be some disparities such as failure by government to prioritise investing in education (NESP, 2008-17) and (MIE, 2014-19). Furthermore, Hauya (1993) and the National Education Policy (2016) suggest that education and training have not been successful as there are challenges surrounding funding for implementation. This study argues that Malawi should revisit its education budget allocation and fiscal discipline as there is evidence that financial constraints play a critical negative impact on the success of implementing education policies (Millennium Consulting Group, 2006; NEP, 2016 and Hauya, 1993). Cuban education investments and fiscal discipline has paid dividends (Kronenberg, 2015).

Based on the context of Malawi's economy, Wasswa-Kintu (1995), Miguel and Kremer (2004) and Hild et al. (2007) argument that formal education is not the only means human capital theory can be implemented is interesting. Based on this argument, Malawi should consider also implementing a robust artisan entrepreneurship program especially for the rural population who may not have excelled in formal education. The argument by Pait (2009) that education should relates to the needs of the people is appropriate and serves to inform this study that Malawi education and training should be tailored to respond to the needs of the Malawians. Based on Cuba's case and

arguments by Wasswa-Kintu (1995), Miguel and Kremer (2004) and Hild et al. (2007), this study argues that informal education has also the potential of empowering people to interact with the world in which they live rationally. It is also being argued that while formal education is discussed comprehensively in this study, the role of informal education has also been given attention as there are some youth who may not be able to attend formal education even if all their challenges were addressed due to various reasons. As argued in the Malawi youth policy (Malawi Government, 2013), mobilising out of school youth for arts and crafts training is a strategic human capital theory action step; arts and crafts training would empower youth out of school to earn income which could also be used to invest in their children's education.

Hild et al. (2007) argues that achievement of human capital theory is also dependent on factors such as culture, sex, race, and the social class background of the individual. Neglecting such factors could pose challenges in empowering the population with skills to make informed choices and increase opportunities for employment as human capital theory argues. Issues of culture in Malawi are critical in the education attendance of girls (Kanyongolo and Malunga, 2011; Government of Malawi, 2013; ESIP, 2009–13 and EMIS, 2013). Based on NESP (2008–17) and NEP (2016), it is apparent that the education policy pays little attention to culture which is a critical issue that has some serious potential of limiting chances of education attendance as argued in chapter 1 section 1.2.4.

Although human capital theory argues that education is one of the main sources for creating human capital, arguments advanced by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001) caution that education could also be a source of exclusion of some groups of the population. These authors argue that as the educated become affluent, the less educated become alienated as the affluent dominate decision-making forums. This caution serves to justify the objective of this study of finding solutions to challenges for attending education so that all people particularly the youth have access to education. It is the assumption of this study that improving the access of quality education as is the case in Cuba could facilitate the empowerment of Malawians to confront poverty and participate actively in national development.

This study has attempted to investigate how the education and youth policy formulation and implementation conform to the arguments of human capital theory.

2.1.2 Post-colonial theory

Although the major focus of this study is not assessing the impact of the British colonial legacy on the Malawi education system, arguments by Kayuni (2011), Libby and Woakes (1980) and Mchombu (1993) that post-colonial theory informs the context of development trajectories practiced by countries after gaining independence from colonial rule, would provide the basis for understanding some of the hard-to-address issues surrounding the education sector. Moreover, the current education system in Malawi is influenced by the British Education System (Hauya, 1993; Kayuni, 2011; Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008). Furthermore, Ahluwalia (2001) and Venn (2006) suggest that post-colonial theory should be tested to establish its relevance to the needs of an independent nation. Although Chirwa (2012) argues that Western donor aid influences the management of the Malawi education system without mentioning colonialism, it can be argued that conditions of aid to the developing countries could be another form of colonial influence.

According to Wandela (2014), post-colonial theory originated from Edward Said's *Orientalism* which was published in 1978. Wandela quotes McCarthy (1998) as stating that "Orientalism" describes how the European Orientalists which comprised scholars, artists, and historians painted the Arab and Asian culture and traditions as inferior to Western culture. Based on McCarthy, it would appear that Western powers were not respectful of the needs of their colonies such that the colonial masters dictated education and development programmes for the colonies. Post-colonial theory provides an insight into whether or not independent African countries such as Malawi have identified their need based education system and development pathways.

In order to have a broader understanding of the theory, this section discusses post-colonial Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda and Tanzania's education system development. This study assumes that these countries have many similarities with Malawi due to their associations under the same colonial masters as well as the sharing of geographical boundaries.

2.1.2.1 Effects of colonialism on education: Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda and Tanzania.

This section presents education development challenges and achievements that the four countries adopted after gaining independence. Wandela (2014) quotes Subedi and Lynn Dazza (2008), arguing that post-colonial studies that examine education phenomena have done so with the aim of making visible the issues and struggles endured by schools towards their improvements. The

study of the education developments in the four countries is premised on the assumption that it will inform the proposed education strategy to increase Malawi's education attendance.

2.1.2.1.1 Zambia and Tanzania

Zambia and Tanzania are discussed together because they both adopted an Afro-centric development theory which is a brand of socialism (Kayuni, 2011). According to Kayuni, Kaunda, president of Zambia, and Nyerere, president of Tanzania, both failed to sustain this ideology (*ujamaa* as it was known in Tanzania and *humanism* in Zambia). According to Libby and Woakes (1980:34), the political leadership believed that without state control of the main industries, their political independence would be meaningless to the majority of Zambians. Based on Libby, Woakes and Kayuni, Zambia and Tanzania may have failed to deliver through their political ideologies because *humanism* and the concept of *state control* are two conflicting ideologies. There is no evidence that the *humanism* as advocated in Zambia favoured state control, humanism is associated with devolution of power to local structures (Kayuni, 2011) which appear to contradict the concept of state control.

Just like Zambia, Tanzania failed to implement the Afro-centric development theory because it was forced on the people by the government. The government controlled the economy; as a result the government was forced to reverse some of its policies governing *ujamaa* (Mchombu, 1993). Under *ujamaa*, Tanzania promoted decentralisation of governance but the participation of communities was minimal and this led to its ineffectiveness (Mchombu, 1993 and Kayuni, 2011). According to Kayuni, by 1975, about 65% of the rural population was forced to form villages. Kayuni appears to suggest that forcing people from their ancestral lands is not in harmony with the spirit of decentralization as the approach voids the right of the people to make their own choices. Based on Mchombu and Kayuni, it could be argued that both Zambia and Tanzania used similar colonial autocratic tactics of forcing people into accepting development ideologies that are not coherent with the needs of the people. It could be further argued that although Zambia and Tanzania appeared to adopt a people centred government, failure to address the needs of the people may have resulted in the dismal achievements as argued by the authors. It is the argument of this study that although the people of Zambia and Tanzania may not have been formally highly educated then, their knowledge about what they needed contributed to the failure of the governance

systems. This could also mean that informal education is a powerful tool for transacting in democracy.

According to Mushi (2009) and Mosha (2000), English became the language of instruction in Tanzania when the British took over from the Germans in 1919. Mushi and Mosha further argue that the British education system focused on creating manpower for work as teachers, secretaries and labourers in basic industries. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994), however argues that there is a strong indication that the British colonialists designed the education curriculum so that Africans did not become highly educated, and to avoid uprising against them. Ngugi wa Thiong'o further argues that no scholarships under British rule were granted to students who did well in mathematics and sciences because that would prepare them to become part of the elite. Based on these arguments, this study argues that the British system of education in Tanzania was not favourable for the empowerment of the citizens to take control of the affairs of their country. Kassam (1994) argues that although Tanzania reformed its education system after independence so that a workforce to build their new nation could be created, it failed to improve the education system. Kassam further argues that some subjects like those in the Science Inquiry Curriculum, were imported from the west and were problematic as the subjects did not address the needs of the Tanzanians. O-saki (2007) argues that foreign donor influence on education also tilted the education system of the nationals towards the Western form of education as the independent Tanzania could not provide the necessary resources to support its education sector.

Based on Simposya (2015) and the discussion in this section, it is argued that Tanzania experienced the problem of importing a foreign education system which did not help empower Tanzanians and arguably informal education played a significant role in reminding the leaders that education that meets the need of people empowers. It could also be argued that by prohibiting Tanzanians from becoming part of the elite by depriving them of education resonates with the caution advanced in the human capital theory that education can be a source of exclusion of some groups in society.

2.1.2.1.2 Zimbabwe

Shizha (2006:20) argues that the education systems in post-colonial states in Africa such as Zimbabwe appear not to have made much progress in shedding previously reified “modern” colonial knowledge to define and determine academic knowledge relevant for African societies and economies. Shizha further argues that there is an assumption that Euro-centric knowledge is

superior to indigenous African knowledge. Tabulawa (2003) argues that the imposition of education approaches such as outcome-based education (OBE) is a result of neo-liberalism that is responsible for international pressures on sub-Saharan Africa for curriculum change. Shizha (2006) further argues that the implementation of Western education in sub-Saharan Africa has led to the low participation and attendance of education by African youth. Shizha observes that the Western-centred education does very little to incorporate the life-worlds and lived experiences of students. Shizha and Tabulawa suggest that post-colonial states such as Zimbabwe have failed to find their own sustainable social economic transformation strategies as they still depend on colonial government strategies and programmes for their development.

2.1.2.1.3 Uganda

Uganda was a British colony (Wasswa-Kintu, 1995). Wasswa-Kintu argues that the Uganda post-independence development ambitions have not been successful. While Wasswa-Kintu argues that internal factors are more important than the external factors in inhibiting development in Uganda, Wasswa-Kintu appears to overlook some critical factors that other authors such as Mino (2011) make. Mino argues that Uganda's development funding for education is provided by external donors who in turn influence her education programmes by dictating education programme reforms. Mino further argues that international donors typically overlook the education content of recipient countries in the context of their needs. Mino argues that during the colonial era Uganda's education system only created labourers who served the colonial government and not the needs of the country. Mino's argument resonates strongly with arguments advanced by Hauya (1993) and Tabulawa (2003) that colonial masters effected African education systems negatively. There is also a strong indication that the colonial education system was oppressive as Africans in Uganda were forced to learn British history and not African history, to avoid uprisings. Local management of schools was restricted to primary education; primary education did not empower Ugandans to contribute significantly to the development of their country (Mino, 2011). Wasswa-Kintu (1995) acknowledges that Uganda has failed to manage its economy without external support thereby agreeing with Mino (2011), Tabulawa (2003), Chirwa (2012) and Hauya (1993) who argue that colonial governments still influence the education system in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.1.2.1.4 Malawi

Malawi acknowledges that the current education policy, such as the introduction of free primary education, is a foreign ideology (ESIP, 2009–13). As discussed in section 1.1, Malawi was under British rule from 1894 to 1964. The years between 1964 and 1980 were special to Malawi because of its unique approach to development compared to other countries (Kayuni, 2011). Crosby (1980: vii) states that Malawi under Dr. Banda was one of the intriguing African countries since it did not fit the usual pattern of development. According to Kayuni, Banda's development programmes focused on agriculture and transport with the aim of fighting poverty, ignorance and disease. Just like other post-colonial development programmes, this study has not been successful in finding any account that argues that Banda promoted native education as a means for the social and economic transformation of Malawi. Emphasis on education was supposed to be critical at that time because unlike other African countries, Malawi experienced a decline in primary school enrolment between 1956 and 1963 while the population increased three-fold (Williams, 1978:159-60). According to Pike (1968); Kayuni (2011); Mkandawire (1999); Dzimbiri (2004a) and Gulhati (1989), Malawi's development success story saw dependence on British aid declining and being one of the fast-developing countries. According to Gulhati, progress was influenced by the banning of trade unions as Africans were paid low wages as a way of attracting foreign investors. Gulhati further argues that Malawi experienced unprecedented national development such as agriculture under Banda because he was slow to Africanize commercial industry. Kishindo (1997) and Harrigan (2002) faults Banda's development philosophy as they argue that Malawians did not benefit from the economic development of the country as the focus was on economic development rather than increased access to education. This study argues that Dr. Banda's development philosophy was contradictory in itself as his post-colonial strategy aimed at eradicating poverty and yet Malawians did not benefit from the economic progress that the country achieved. Arguably, this is a typical example of the political rhetoric of the post-colonial era. Another example of political rhetoric that does not help Malawi is the failure by the current Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) led government to implement its party manifesto, which promised to reduce the distances between schools to about 5 km (Manifesto of the Democratic Progressive Party, 2014) to enable more children to attend school.

As discussed in section 1.2.2, the colonial system of education was not designed to foster national development as argued by Banda (1982). Furthermore, Ng'ambi (2010) argued that the colonial

education system in Malawi created a small elite population to serve the colonial government. The influence of foreign agendas such as education sector reforms on Malawi and other sub-Saharan African countries has been the challenge for many of these countries as argued by Obanya (2010). Obanya argues that the need to review the curriculum to reflect the new political order was a common experience among countries emerging from colonial rule including Malawi. However, Malawi has not been successful in producing curriculum that resonates with the needs of Malawians as argued by Hauya (1993) and NESP (2008-17). Stuart (2011), argues that due its dependence on donor aid, Malawi's education system has been negatively affected as evidenced by its failure to formulate a curriculum that responds to Malawi's needs. Kayuni (2011), Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008), argue that because of development philosophies adopted by African leaders which were influenced by foreign donors through conditions of development assistance, the education system have not benefitted the nationals.

Based on Freire (1972, 2000) and the current education challenges, Malawi needs an education strategy that empowers its citizens to make informed choices; emancipates its citizens from oppression; the current education system as argued above in this chapter favours the elite in society. It would be a wrong assumption to conclude that if all issues raised in this section were addressed education attendance would improve. This is because other factors which are also critical such as culture are ignored by government. This study has attempted to expose the difficult and complex issues that need to be addressed if Malawi is to improve its education attendance.

2.1.2.1.5 Conclusion

Based on the impact of post-colonial theory on Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Uganda, it is fair to conclude that just as was the colonial education system, it would appear that the education system in Malawi does not provide confidence that it is positioned strategically to empower its citizens through education and training as argued in the human capital theory.

Why then have the independent states such as Malawi failed to improve the education sector as they are no longer under the rule of their colonial masters? This study has attempted to provide some insights to the question.

2.1.3 Motivation theory

Chugh (2011) introduces motivation as an important factor for supporting human capital theory. For example, Chugh states that family and school factors such as travelling long distances to school have a negative impact on students completing high school in India. Chugh appears to suggest that for a person to attend education there is need to ensure that frustrating factors are addressed. Based on this argument, it could be argued that human capital theory implementation would be difficult if issues surrounding motivation are not taken into account. Various studies have indicated that girls in many of the sub-Saharan African countries are less motivated to attend education than boys because they are overwhelmed by cultural obligations such as attending to domestic chores (NESP, 2008–17; The Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015-2019 and ENABLE, 2006). It could then be argued that there are issues that frustrate girls' education that have not been addressed. It is therefore critical that issues surrounding the prohibition of girls' education are urgently addressed to avoid their exclusion as argued by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001). Based on Hudson (2016), who argues that epistemic quality which is based on teachers' approach to teaching mathematics (quality of what pupils come to know, understand and be able to do) has the potential of excluding some learners from participating successfully in the lesson, this study argues that motivation theory is critical in ensuring that even learners that experience challenges in grasping lessons quickly are not frustrated by teachers' approach to teaching certain subjects. Although Hudson's discussion focuses on mathematics, it could be applicable to other subjects such as science subjects. It is therefore important that teachers in classrooms play a vital role of motivating their class to attend and enjoy lessons. Kronenberg (2015) appears to agree with Hudson as he argues that teachers' quality is critical in influencing education attendance. It strongly appears that the full potential of human capital theory can be realized when complemented by motivation theory. Based on Hudson and Kronenberg, this study argues that the behaviour of teachers and their approach in class has a bearing on motivating pupils and students to learn.

Huitt (2011:1) and Maslow (1943) as written by Cherry (2015) argue that there is a general consensus that motivation is an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction. This view is supported by Cherry (2015) who highlights the importance of Maslow's motivation theory as a needs satisfaction based theory. A critical analysis of motivation theories clearly demonstrates that for a

person to develop interest to participate in any initiative arguably such as education attendance, there must be factors of self- satisfaction that must be met.

According to the NESP (2008-17), NEP (2016), ESIP (2009–13) and the EMIS (2013), Malawi also experiences long distance to school especially in the rural areas as a prohibiting factor for youth to complete their education. This study has taken interest in establishing the role of parents in motivating their children to attend education (despite having to travel long distances) as South Korean and Japanese parents play a critical role of motivating their children to attend education (Rogan, 2013). One of the initiatives taken by the parents is to help their children to do their school homework. While levels of education among the Malawi parents especially in the rural areas may not qualify them to help in doing homework, there could be other initiatives that they could undertake such as encouraging their children to attend school.

While the current National Youth Policy (NYP) and the ESIP have recognized the value of parents in promoting youth education, the current Malawi Institute of Education Strategic Plan (MIE, 2014–19:9) makes a broad assumption: ‘parents will encourage their wards to remain in school’. This broad assumption may not be helpful as there is no evidence in Malawi literature that has critically discussed how parents encourage their children to attend education. To the contrary, Chilimampung (2005), UNESCO (2004) and Banda (2003) argue that parents through cultural practices in rural areas are responsible for the low education attendance among youth especially girls. Apparently, no action plans have been put in place for the orientation of parents on their roles in promoting education attendance. Ganah (2012) quotes Gold (2010:10) who argues that student motivation and engagement in courses is a well-known problem and challenge in higher education. However, Franken (2006) claims that while motivation is involved in the performance of all learned responses; the learning process has to be energized for it to occur. Howey (2014) further advances an argument that counselling is vital for motivating students to attend classes.

While motivation theory is critical in improving youth education attendance, it has some significant weaknesses in that there are no standard frameworks for motivation. For example, Robbins (2003) argues that people are motivated by different things and that there is not one approach of motivation theory that can be considered as a panacea for all motivation needs. Furthermore, Warrilow (2009–14) argues that strategies for motivating education attendance should keep on being reviewed to match new needs that emerge. Arguments by Robbins and

Warrilow suggest that periodic policy review is critical since needs keep changing. Based on these arguments, this study argues that motivation of youth to attend education should be informed by the environment in which they live.

2.1.3.1 Empowerment of women theories and cultural practices

Empowerment is a process that allows individuals to achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity (Lord and Hutchison, 1992:4, Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). This definition resonates with the human capital theory as argued in section 2.1.1 and Esplen, Heerah and Hunter (2006) who also define empowerment as the ability to control resources, develop/have self-confidence and participate in decision-making processes. In the context of this study, empowerment of a woman focuses on her ability to attend education, increase her opportunities for employment so that she can be financially independent and also participate in governance matters such as having power to make political choices. Based on Malawi female researchers such as White (2010), Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011), education would facilitate the achievement of these forms of empowerment for women.

Hild et al. (2007) argue that the achievement of human capital theory depends on other factors such as gender. Therefore, this study focuses on the education of both males and females and at the same time focuses on female education as in Malawi there is a disparity in the school dropout rate which is estimated at 11.7% for boys and 21.1% for girls in secondary schools (NESP, 2008–17). The National Education Policy (NEP, 2016) acknowledges the low participation of females in education. However, the exclusion of women from education is not unique to Malawi as there is strong evidence that women and girls in Western countries were excluded from mainstream education till the nineteenth century (Christine, Woyshner and Bonnie, 1997). Christine, Woyshner and Bonnie argue that in the 1800s women began to play central roles as teachers and as learners. The National Women's History Museum (2007) argues that Harvard College, the first college to admit women, did not do so for another 200 years after its opening in 1636. This piece of data serves to emphasise the need for a robust education strategy that puts women's education at the centre so that Malawian girls do not have to wait for many years to access education.

According to Palen (2001) and Nsapato (2010), education is necessary if women's empowerment is to be achieved. Nevertheless, Lloyd (2013) argues that women's empowerment is more of a development issue than a gender issue as their empowerment not only benefits women, but also

the entire nation. This is probably why a female author, White (2010), suggests the inclusion of males in the process of empowering women. The education of girls is not a favour but a right as recognised in the Malawi Education Legal Framework (Ng'ambi, 2010). Lewis (2012:1) states that 'Women's education is women's empowerment and that educating girls and women is an important step in overcoming poverty which is the bedrock of violations of human rights, including the rights of girls to be educated'. Based on Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011), and Banda (2003), the disparity between political rhetoric and practice do not give confidence that women's empowerment policies will make significant achievements unless the policies are implemented. Based on the arguments in this section (and section 2.2), it is argued that the poor support for girls to attend education and training to acquire skills needed for their ability to make informed decisions, and also to have wide range of choices for their development falls short of arguments advanced in the human capital theory.

2.1.3.2 Economic independence

The subject of economic independence is important in this study because there is evidence that most women in Malawi are excluded from economic activities because of their lack of necessary educational qualifications (Malawi Government, 2013 and NESP, 2008-17). Banda (2003) and MIE (2014-19) argue that although significant progress has been made at a policy level to have gender-sensitive educational frameworks, the situation on the ground is not encouraging. Based on Banda's arguments, this study argues that policy rhetoric that is not followed with action is not helpful in any effort of women's empowerment. The Report (2011) for Malawi showed that female employees remained at less than 25% in all government departments in spite of the government's empowerment efforts. According to another Human Development Report (2016) for Malawi, the situation has still not changed as only 14.9% of women had some secondary education compared to 24.2% of males. The low number of educated women could also mean low representation of women in forums that make policies. Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011) further claim that 90% of the agricultural labour force which is the main source of revenue for Malawi is provided by women who are mostly rural-based and less educated. The Rights Education Project quotes Tomasevski (2005) stating that the exclusion of women from education leads to women being in poverty.

This study argues that educating girls would enable them to venture into other economic sources as there is no evidence found in literature that suggest that women choose agriculture as an option from other forms of opportunities. The Government of Malawi (2004) argues that research has proven that the education of a woman has positive effects on national development as it increases her chances of accessing paid employment and also prevents early marriages. Based on the Malawi Government (2013) that argues that girls are still struggling to access support for their empowerment, it could be concluded that policy recommendations are not matched with action.

There is empirical data on how empowerment of women has been beneficial in various countries as opposed to Malawi where there are scarce models of women's empowerment as argued by Ranadive (2003). Ranadive is quoted by Esplen, Heerah and Hunter (2006) stating that various countries in South Asia such as Thailand have implemented and shown good results of women's empowerment programmes. Bordat et al. (2011) explain that Morocco is an example of an African country where women have progressed due to empowerment through education. This study argues that unless women are supported and motivated to attend education beyond primary education, they will remain excluded from forums that make policies that affect them thereby risking omitting critical needs that include education for their children. It is also argued based on human capital theory that women could be provided training in artisan entrepreneurship; arguably the majority of women in the villages that are less educated could benefit from such training.

2.1.3.3 Lack of understanding of cultural challenges for women's empowerment

According to Chilimampungu (2005), issues about women's empowerment are known but there is under representation of the issues and subsequent actions plans to deal with them. Failure to match real issues with pertinent action plans could be time and resource wasting as the issues may not be addressed. Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011) and White (2011) argue that complexities of culture and failure to harmonise action plans by various policies poses challenges in emancipating women from oppression. This study argues that identification and critical analysis of the challenges facing women's empowerment and implementing coherent action plans is imperative if women are to acquire skills to make informed choices and increase their choices for their development as argued by human capital theory.

2.1.4 Decentralisation theory

According to the discussion of the post-colonial theory, one of the reasons why the colonial government failed to create a relevant education system was its failure to decentralize the management of the education system. According to Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984), decentralisation is a component of governance that deals with devolution of power. The Financial Reporting Council for the UK Corporate Governance Code (2012) and Thomas and Jefferson (1776) suggest that devolution of power is critical in sustainable development. Decentralisation theory is critical in this study because the Malawi education system was ‘decentralised’ based on the recommendations by the Education Service Review, MoEST and Price Waterhouse in 1988 (Ministry of Education and The Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, 2004 and MoEST, 2010). The concept of decentralisation is also pertinent in this study because there is evidence that it is a potentially effective strategy for school improvement in developing countries (Anderson and Mundy, 2014). Decentralisation has led to improvement of the education sector in developed countries such as Germany (Busemeyer and Vossiek, 2015). Busemeyer and Vossiek present a local capacity-building concept that involves Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as implementers of the management of local schools. Mupindu (2012) also argues that Zimbabwe’s education success story is attributed to the active participation of local school development committees and associations. Mupindu’s argument serves to suggest that decentralisation is another tool for creating human capital as it provides an opportunity for people who would otherwise be excluded from participating in national development to participate.

As much as decentralisation has facilitated improvements in schools in other countries, it may not be an automatic effective approach for Malawi, as Prud’homme (2010) argues that decentralisation is a policy concern in Malawi. Prud’homme argues that the central government in Malawi is resisting devolving power to local district assemblies. Chiweza (2010) appears to agree with Prud’homme; Chiweza argues that Malawi lacks support towards provision of information to enable Malawian citizens to understand and support the decentralisation system. Based on Meyers and Dammert’s (2006) suggestion that instead of asking whether decentralisation is good or bad, it is advisable to explore what ought to be done to make the decentralisation system work better, this study has explored the question. According to Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984), there are four types of decentralisations: political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralisation, but

for the purpose of this study only political and administrative decentralisations are discussed as they have a direct influence on the Malawi system of education.

2.1.4.1 Political decentralisation

According to Dulani (2000) and Hussein (2005), political decentralisation is the devolution of policy and decision-making power (such as content of curricula) to local governments, sometimes democratically elected. Dulani and Hussein further argue that political decentralisation is a challenge in Malawi because there is a high level of reluctance for the devolution of power from the central government to the local government. Conflicts that arise between ward councillors and members of parliament over powers to manage local development programmes are a typical example (Tambulasi, 2009). In Malawi, ward councillors are local development agents while members of parliament are law makers and are always linked to the central government in terms of allegiance as some of them are also cabinet ministers. What is interesting is that while the Western powers that colonized Africa have embraced democracy, the African countries seems to be stuck with the colonial autocratic system of governance. The apparent lack of political will to empower local government has contributed to slow development in public sectors such as education (Tambulasi, 2009). It is the argument of this study that unless there is political will which is followed by action, empowerment of local structures to manage the education system would be difficult. As a result, it would be unlikely that access to quality education as stipulated in the national education policy would be achieved. This argument is based on revelations in NESP (2008-17) that suggests that rural areas are less served compared to urban areas.

2.1.4.2 Administrative decentralisation

Administrative decentralisation refers to the transfer of planning and management responsibilities from central to local structures. Hussein (2005) and Tambulasi (2009) argue that the central government in Malawi is struggling to transfer planning and management responsibilities fully to local government citing financial constraints as the reason. Hussein and Tambulasi argue that lack of quality staff to manage the affairs of the local government is a direct consequence of government failure to decentralise. Hussein and Tambulasi also cite the failure to conduct school inspections especially in rural areas as another challenge of the education sector emanating from flaws in decentralisation. Based on Hussein and Tambulasi's arguments, it is difficult under the current

situation in Malawi for the education sector to implement a macro-policy initiative approach (financial, governance, infrastructural and material changes) as argued by Anderson and Mundy (2014) to improve schools. It could also be difficult to effect a system-wide policy that creates platforms for education programme-based school improvement initiatives to interact with local structures; there is a lack of qualified staff and also knowledge on the part of local people about their roles in a decentralisation system of governance as argued by Hussein (2005) and Tambulasi (2009). There is need for real transformation in terms of education governance if decentralisation is to be an effective strategy to improve education attendance in Malawi. Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984) state that the extent to which power is transferred by each type of decentralisation can be classified as: de-concentration, delegation and devolution. The extent to which the Government of Malawi has transferred power to local districts is not helpful as it has opted for a de-concentration form of shifting power where the central government makes decisions for the local government to implement as suggested by Dulani (2000). Dulani further argues that the actual value for decentralisation is difficult to account for due to inadequate facilities in the districts. Dulani attributes this challenge to a weak financial base. Dulani also argues that decentralisation in Malawi is faced with the challenge of unutilised stacks of reports due to a manpower shortage.

Based on Jagero, Kwandayi and Longwe (2014), the delegation form of transferring power where the local level can decide but decisions can be overturned by the central government (delegation) is another hiccup in the management of the education sector at the district level in Malawi. The delegation type of decentralisation could probably be less motivating to local assemblies as there could be fears of vetoing strategic decisions at the central government. According to the current decentralisation policy, the apparent resistance by central government to support districts in Malawi is illegal because parliament passed the Local Government Act (1998) which enshrines the policy of decentralisation (The Malawi National Decentralisation Policy, 2010). The national policy among other issues strives to:

- Devolve administrative and political authority to the district level.
- Divert the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfer them to the district.
- Promote popular participation in the governance and development of the district.

Furthermore, the policy aims to create a democratic environment and institutions for governance and development at the local level, which will facilitate the participation of the grassroots in

decision-making (The Malawi National Decentralisation Policy, 2010). Contrary to the Malawi form of decentralisation, the Ghana Decentralisation Policy implementation assessment indicated that from September 1991/92 school attendance was at 49.2% while in 2005/06 it was 78.9% representing an improvement of 29.7%. The Ghanaian policy is clear on its action plan to achieve the set education objectives and also clearly outlines how devolution of power would be managed. The apparent positive achievements of Ghana's decentralisation has not however been without challenges, as Goel (2010) states that Ghana's decentralisation lacks a fiscal decentralisation policy which makes it difficult to support some activities such as training. Nevertheless, Ghana has made some gains in empowering local assemblies to manage their development programmes.

A critical review of Malawi's decentralisation policy reveals weak strategic links between public policies. For example, the Mulanje District Assembly Development Plan (2007–2010) does not reflect aspirations of the education policy. This is probably why Chiweza (2010:4) states that evidence from four Malawian districts studied suggests that not much service delivery that includes education could be attributed to the decentralisation process itself. This contrasts with the positive effects of decentralisation on schooling as evidenced from the Sao Paulo States' Education Reform which indicated that rural areas registered a decreased school dropout while school resources increased (Madeira, 2007), while Mupindu (2008) in the Efficacy of Education decentralisation policy in Zimbabwe claims that there was an increase from 60.3% in 2000 to 79.7% in 2007 in education attendance. On the one hand, the concept of decentralisation is foreign and politically sensitive in some countries and that is probably why Winkler and Yeo (2007) argue that the process of evaluating the impact of decentralisation has been resisted in some countries. On the other hand, it is evident, as Hinsz, Meyers and Dammert (2006) argue that due to decentralisation, East Asian countries have been successful and are characterized by teachers' understanding of their demand in rural areas. This point is critical for Malawi as the ESIP (2009–13) reported that the Malawi government struggles to send teachers to rural areas as there are no incentives to recruit and sustain them in the rural areas.

According to Hofstede's 5 dimensions of power (Hofstede, 2009–14, author emphasis), the challenges surrounding Malawi's decentralisation revolves around '*large power distance*' which is characterized by centralised authority, paternalistic management style, many hierarchy

levels and acceptance that power has its own privileges among other characteristics. This means that although Malawi is a democracy the practice does not reflect democracy as Dulani (2000) and Tambulasi (2009) suggest.

Based on the arguments surrounding decentralization, it is argued in this study that devolution of power in terms of administrative and financial would empower the local structures to implement some of the policy action points such as school inspections. School inspections would ensure good quality education that provides knowledge and skills to youth for their empowerment. It is the argument of this study that poor decentralisation in Malawi has contributed negatively to the achievement of human capital theory as it has apparently compromised education attendance.

2.1.5 Corruption theory

Corruption theory is relevant in this study as any existence of corruption has the risk of undermining the fulfilment of the education policy objective of ensuring access to quality education to all as Hussein (2005) suggests. Corruption has multiple definitions but is generally understood as diversion of public funds or resources for private gains, as argued by Chakrabarti and Dhār (2013) and Nnandi (2014). These authors argue that the central point is that it deprives less powerful people, who are usually poor, of the basic necessities of life.

Although the focus of this study is youth education attendance, an understanding of the negative implication of corruption on education in Malawi is critical because public services such as education have been crippled because of corruption (Hussein, 2005). Poisson (2010) also shows the links between education and corruption by arguing that improving transparency and accountability in the education sector could be a strategy to reduce corruption. Based on Hofstede's (2009–14, author emphasis) lack of '*small power distance*' which means decentralised authority and decision-making responsibility, lack of acceptance and questioning of authority. The argument being advanced is that corruption and decentralisation are strongly linked in Malawi. This could mean that addressing issues surrounding decentralisation could in some way influence positively the reduction of corruption. Hussein (2005) and Matonga (2015) argue that a reduction of corruption has the potential of improving public services such as the education sector.

The work of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has not proven effective as media reports indicate that politicians who are usually at the centre of corruption scandals make it hard for the ACB to

operate objectively (Matonga, 2015). Since corruption involves resource misallocation, corruption becomes an important focus if education is to be developed. It is a serious omission not to include corruption as a challenge to the success of policy implementation in both education and youth policies as is the case in Malawi now. The omission could be an indicator of some serious entrenchment of the practice at the state level. Corruption however is not unique to Malawi. Other countries like Kenya and Zambia are also struggling to deal with it (Hakijamil Trust, 2010; Zambia Youth Policy, 1994). While corruption is generally associated with dishonesty, theft, abuse of public funds, Odinkaku (2010), Lamour (2007a) and Sietsema (2005) advance a different argument. The authors argue that corruption can be beneficial to the national economy. Sietsema further cites China as a corrupt country but one which benefits from it. This argument is legally unacceptable as corruption is a criminal offence in Malawi (Hussein, 2005).

Based on media reports (Gondwe, 2015 and Matonga, 2015), this study argues that corruption is complex to deal with in Malawi because it benefits the same people that consider it immoral. Furthermore, Hussein (2005:4) in his assessment of the enforcing mechanisms for combating corruption in Malawi, states that while there is consensus that corruption is use of public funds for private motives or gain, there is lack of agreement among policy makers and informed members of the public on its causes. In order to understand the anatomy and physiology of corruption in the education sector, it is prudent to understand the form of corruption in practice, as argued by Lambsdorff (2002). There are various forms of corruption but principal, agent theory strongly relates to the form of corruption commonly practised in Malawi. Figure 2.1 illustrates the theory which is adopted from Lambsdorff's publication on 'How Corruption Affects Public Welfare – A Review of Theories' (2002:7).

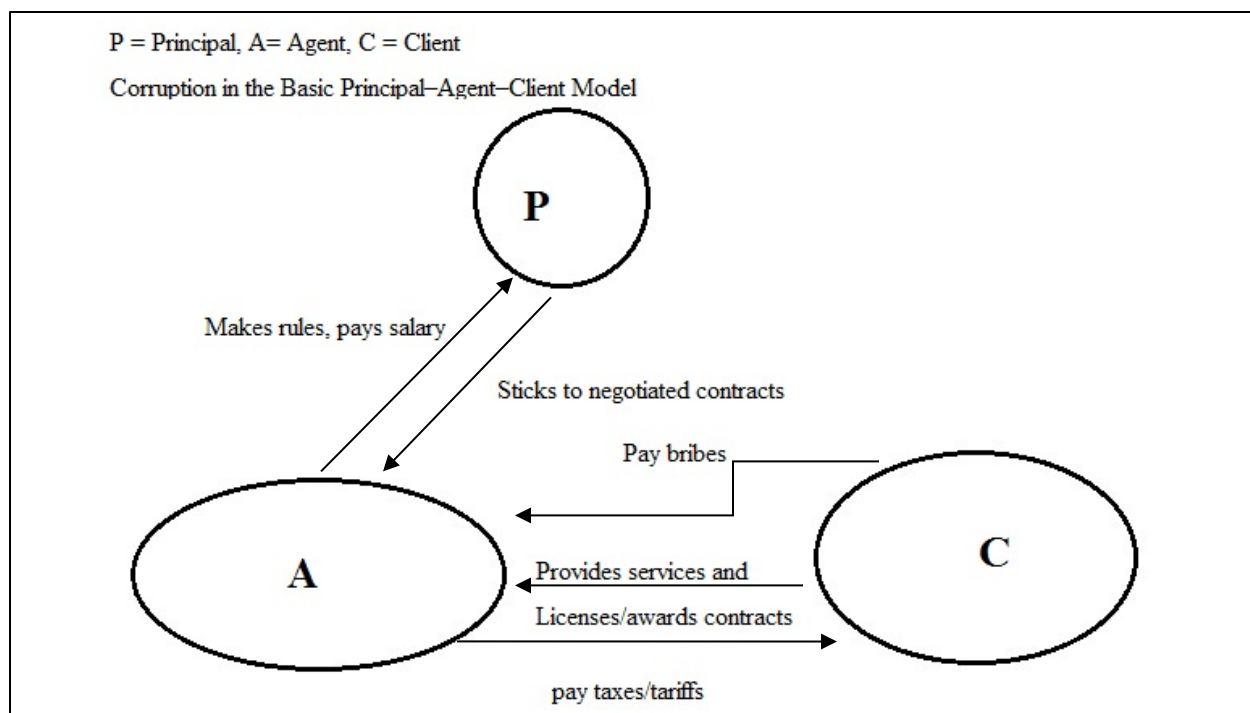


Figure 2.1: Principal Agent Theory

Figure 2.1 shows that corruption in government is well organized which suggests that it is not easy to deal with since the government which is supposed to fight corruption is at the centre of it. This is why Lamour (2007b) argues that bureaucracy is paradoxical in the sense that the same people who are supposed to fight corruption nurture it.

Figure 2.1 suggests that the poor are victims of corrupt practices as they do not feature anywhere in the model. This, however, does not mean that the poor are not corrupt but their impact on development programmes may be negligible. Principal agent theory seems to strongly suggest that the government's role in dealing with corruption is critical and key to any success in limiting corruption in a country. Based on the arguments advanced above as regards roles, such as making rules and paying salaries, it is fair to conclude that the success of fighting corruption in any country is to a great extent at the mercy of the government in power. For the impact of corruption on educational provision in Malawi, see Appendix A6. Suggestions by Moyo (2009) that developed countries should stop giving financial support to developing countries as a strategy to reduce

corruption may not be ideal. Although her arguments that foreign aid is fuelling corruption because it makes up for the variances in national budgets caused by corrupt leaders in developing countries could be correct, the suggested option is not the best. What Moyo may have neglected is that corruption is about human values (Chakrabart, 2013). According to the current public service reform framework (Malawi Public Service Charter, Republic of Malawi, 2014 and Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2014), issues surrounding bad governance leading to corruption may be checked. It is yet to be seen if this is not to be another political rhetoric. Based on the arguments advanced in this section, this study argues that any efforts to empower people with knowledge and skills would be greatly undermined if corruption goes un-checked. This means that any strategies to improve the Malawi education sector that does not consider establishing systems that would reduce diversion of funds would most likely be less effective.

2.1.6 Media development theory

Based on the discussion of the above theories, it appears that the media is critical as it involves the transmission of messages such as reporting corruption. Media is also a strategic partner in the promotion of youth education as ESIP (2009–13) and the Government of Malawi (2013) suggest. Based on media reports (Ponje, 2014 and Matonga, 2015), it is evident that the media has the capacity to contribute to the reduction of corruption thereby supporting the dissemination of quality education. The argument being advanced is that the media plays a critical role in modern days in the area of Information Communication and Technology tutorials which is part of empowering youth with knowledge and skills as suggested by James (2003). Moreover, Lambsdorff (2012), Seefeldt (2010) and Rothstein (2007) appear to suggest that education influences the achievement of moral reasoning. Both electronic and print media can contribute towards the identification and dissemination of research findings that could inform education strategies for improving education attendance. The media development theory in this study is relevant as it contributes to:

- Promotion of decentralisation (good governance), fighting corruption as Boehm (2007) argues.
- Promoting youth education attendance (James, 2003).

The media in Malawi has been instrumental in many social economic developments, as argued by James (2003). One way the media could contribute towards improving education attendance among the youth is to partner with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), as James argues. However, James observes that CSOs in Malawi have not contributed significantly to the promotion of education and yet the media have brought forward issues requiring advancement by the CSOs. The argument by James serves to call for action to enhance the partnership between media and the CSOs in promoting education. The media and CSOs partnership could benefit the education sector by influencing change or implementation of policy action steps to improve attendance. The media has been responsible in Malawi for exposing corruption that is negatively affecting the quality of education (see Appendix A4). The media could play a critical role in communication, exerting pressure for reforms such as decentralisation, mobilising citizens for mass protests whenever necessary as Appendix A6 shows. Kahneman and Tversky (2002) argue that experience shapes the future; it is hoped that the involvement of the media in the past in covering similar education challenges should inform strategies for improving youth attendance.

Although the media can contribute towards national development such as education, as argued by James (2003), Shah (2006) also argues that the media can be instrumental in civil unrest thereby causing destruction to the same development it facilitates. While this argument makes sense, the value of the media in promoting youth empowerment through education and training is the interest of this study.

2.1.7 Linkage of theory perspectives and value to the study

Human capital theory provides the framework for the analysis of the study data especially that which deals with empowerment of the youth through education.

The empowerment of women is a special case as girls are a vulnerable group that needs special attention and therefore, this study pays attention to the inhibiting factors such as culture and its impact on their education.

Motivation theory provides the mirror for identifying gaps in the education policy formulation and implementation as regards creating a conducive environment for learning and teaching.

Corruption theory provides the framework for testing transparency and accountability systems in the education sector in order to reduce the diversion of education funds.

Post-colonial theory and decentralisation theories provide the basis for evaluating the governance system in which education services are delivered in Malawi. The two theories also expose the impact of the centralised form of government which evidently has failed to improve the education sector.

Finally, the media development theory is critical in the fight against corruption and also promotion of the education attendance of the youth. It is a tool for advocacy to bring about change. The media could also be an enabler for people (human capital) to hold government responsible and accountable in democratic governance.

Overall, the theories provide a framework for analysing the data presented in this thesis. The next section explores factors known to affect education attendance in Malawi.

2.2 Factors affecting education attendance in Malawi

Based on NEP (2016), NESP (2008-17), Hango (1994-2003), Hussein (2005) and Jagero et al. (2014), challenges associated with attending education are linked to school, family, motivation, culture and governance factors. Pigozzi (2003), Mosha (2000) and Mlaki (2014) further argue that factors affecting education attendance vary and include the contextual setting of a given education system, learners or pupils motivation, education inputs, such as number and quality of teachers, teaching and learning materials, school facilities, parent and community participation, teachers' motivation and accountability. Mushi (2000) emphasises the need to understand education attendance problems in context as country needs and sources of challenges may be different. For example, the lack of female hostels in public schools in Malawi (UNIMA, 2015 and LUANAR, 2015) (necessary accommodation for girls to attend schools away from home -see chapter 4 of thesis) could have a different underlying cause from another country with similar problems (Malawi Government and UNESCO, 2007).

In addition to understanding factors affecting education attendance, Anderson and Mundy (2014) in 'School Improvement in Developing Countries: Experiences and Lessons Learned' have cited overall approaches to school improvement including student learning; teacher development; school management; parent and community involvement; gender in education; and monitoring and evaluation as issues pertinent for consideration in improving schools. This study has included these

issues as important to understand with regard to the context of Malawi's education system and needs.

Although the issues raised above are pertinent, there are missing longstanding elements which are the underlying issues that trigger the existence of the listed issues. It is the argument of this study that failure to identify root issues has the risk of wasting resources as the action steps would target symptomatic problems. One such longstanding issue is foreign aid and its influence on educational provision in Malawi. While Malawi as a country has to some extent contributed to its own failure to address the problem of low education attendance, as argued by Kadzamira and Rose (2003), this study argues that foreign development partners have also contributed to the problem. For example, Chirwa (2012) exposed the negative influence of development partners towards indigenous development programmes. In her study, Chirwa (2012) argued that Malawi's Education Sector Wide Approach Programme (SWAP) has undermined national education priorities and also the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness. Chirwa also observed that countries that donate or loan more money than others tend to influence national policy design and implementation in the recipient country which sometimes has adversely affected results, such as the Education for All Programme implemented in Malawi. The arguments advanced by Chirwa seem to be supported by (NESP, 2008–17) which indicates that the Malawi government is still struggling to achieve its education policy objectives. The revelation that the World Bank influenced the implementation of free primary education in Malawi (ESIP, 2009–13), which studies by Kadzamira and Rose (2003) and EMIS (2013) indicate that the influx of primary school pupils has brought challenges in the education sector, is another example. According to Kadzamira, Rose and EMIS, both the shortage of infrastructure for learning and poor quality of education provision have contributed to the rise of low youth education attendance. As will be shown below (e.g. section 2.2.1.1) both of these challenges are linked to free primary education; a concept of the foreign development partners. The pressure to achieve foreign education reforms is most probably due to the argument advanced by Chirwa (2012) that foreign powers exert pressure on recipient poor countries to conform to their 'imported education programmes'. Malawi is a recipient of World Bank funds to implement international education set goals (NESP, 2008–17). Based on the arguments advanced in this section, this study argues that the influence of foreign donors on Malawi's education system should be evaluated in terms of the needs of Malawi.

Since the education sector is influenced by various policies, a review of those policies in relation to their implication on attendance is shown in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 shows the list of the policies and legal framework that aim at influencing strategies for youth education attendance. The reason for discussing this table is to show policies, strategic plans and legal frameworks that have not been successful in increasing the attendance of youth in education in Malawi.

Table 2.1: Policies, strategic plans and legal framework

Policy	Target	Action plans
1.1 National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2008–17).	Access and equity of education services. Quality and relevance of education. Governance and Management of the education sector (NESP, 2008–17).	Building of schools and colleges, training of teachers, enhance inspection and monitoring of schools, training on national strategy for community participation in the management of schools, strengthening of partnership with the private sector in secondary education and enhancing qualifications of secondary school teachers (NESP, 2008–17).
1.2 National Youth Policy (Malawi Government, 2013).	Develop the full potential of youth and to promote their active participation in National Development (Malawi Government, 2013).	Training in entrepreneurship, life skills, family planning in schools, adult literacy, traditional and sports development (Malawi Government, 2013).
1.3 Decentralisation Policy (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 2010)	Decentralise political and administrative authority to district level (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 2010).	Local government elections and re-organization of district offices (Malawi Decentralisation Policy, 2010).
1.4 Legal framework (Education For All National Action Plan (2004)	Enhancing access to education for all Malawians (Education For All National Action Plan (2004).	Legal backing of the National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2008–17) action plans in 1.1 of this table.

Based on table 2.1, it is clear that some problems in the education sector are due to the failure to implement the education policy as the suggested action plans have the potential for improving the education sector. An example is the failure by government to engage the youth in sustainable artisan training as evidenced by continual discussion of the same problems in subsequent youth policies such as the 2001 and 2013 youth policies (Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, 2001 and Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2013).

2.2.1 National Education Policy- NEP (2016) and National Education Sector Plan- NESP (2008-17), Education Sector Implementation Plan (2009-13).

According to the National Education Policy (2016), the government still has challenges to achieve its priority areas as mentioned in chapter 1, section 1.6. The policy has outlined some action plans to address the identified challenges but surprisingly the policy repeats many of the issues raised in the ESIP (2009-13) without explaining why the ESIP failed to achieve its goals. The risk of not analysing the reasons for the failure is that the same mistakes made in the implementation of the ESIP could be repeated. For example, the current policy suggests the development of school improvement plans in order to achieve quality, accessible and equitable basic education even though the same approach previously failed (ESIP 2009-13). It is not known how the government thinks that this approach would be effective this time around. It is argued in this study that new policies should be informed by evaluation results of previous policies as evaluations provide lessons that shape new policies as Wheelen and Hunger (1998) suggest. Furthermore, the new policy is in many sections a duplication of the NESP (2008-17) which is also discussed in this study. The new policy while paying attention to critical areas of education such as accessibility, does not address entirely all the drivers of Malawi's education which are political, social, economic, technological, environmental and legal which Tambulasi (2010) discusses. This could be the reason Kamlongera (2012) argues that the coverage of the drivers of change in education policies is incomprehensive leading to deficient coverage of needs in the education sector. According to National Education Profile – NEP (2014) and the current education policy, it is argued that Malawi is stuck with the donor driven reforms such as free primary education (FPE) as evidenced by its continued promotion. It is argued in this study that the current education policy lacks an understanding of some critical issues that are responsible for the low education attendance. However, if some of the action plans in the policy such as decentralisation of the education sector

were implemented, there would be some significant improvement in the education sector (see e.g. section 2.2.1.1).

The current government (DPP) in its party manifesto acknowledges the need to recognise the value of secondary education (Manifesto of the Democratic Progressive Party, 2014). However, the emphasis on primary education has led to the increase in primary school graduates who cannot find space in secondary schools. Banda (2003:2) states that the Ministry of Education Science and Technology's Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) which would cover the period from 2000-2015 identified and addressed seven main educational challenges facing Malawi in the following areas: access, equity, quality, relevance, management, planning and finance. Banda (2003) further observes that most efforts are concentrated in primary education and that secondary and tertiary levels need attention as well. Banda's observation may come from the fact that government Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education only discuss primary education (Malawi Millennium Development Goals Report, 2009). This observation is critical since the absence of strategies to deal with the post-primary problem of space directly leads to youth being left out of the education mainstream. Scharff (2007) argues that free primary education has generally increased the number of girls attending primary education but not in secondary schools. This study argues that the government needs to start to focus on the real needs of the education system as it formulates public policies. Based on Howe and Covell's (2010) argument that emancipatory and transformatory education is when people get to study justice/injustice and equality/inequality, this study has investigated the relevance of FPE to the needs of the youth especially girls. Emancipatory or transformatory education has the potential for freeing people from oppression, especially people from the rural areas who are generally under educated, as argued by White (2010). Based on this study, the following areas are discussed in detail:

2.2.1.1 Equity and Access (NESP, 2008–17)

According to NESP (2008-17), the equity and access objective seeks to facilitate the construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure. This objective is supported by ESIP (2009-13) action plans that specifically aim at building schools, teachers' houses and colleges. While the action plans in NESP appear to have the potential of leading to the achievement of the objective, this study informed by motivation theory and Robbins (2003) argues that these action plans may not be sufficient enough to achieve the objective unless the motivation of teachers and students are

part of the action plans or strategy.

The Policy Investment Framework (PIF, 2010) that informed the identification of the ESIP (2009-13) objectives states that the framework was formulated based on comprehensive analysis of the education sector (MoEST, 2001). However, both the PIF and ESIP do not seem to have critically investigated factors leading to the challenge of equity and access. For example, the ESIP states that the population of Malawi is expected to increase by 20% from 2008 to 2018 thereby straining resources for achieving equity and access to education for all, and yet there are no corresponding action plans to mitigate the problem of increased population. Moreover, the issue of population does not feature in the NESP as an important variable in formulating development plans. The problem of equity and access is still persistent (MIE 2014–19). Furthermore, the ESIP action plan states that there would be 1,152 head teachers' houses and two new teacher training colleges built (NESP, 2008-17). Although the problem of housing is not for head teachers only, it is not clear why the plan does not include other teachers in the provision of houses. The plan also neglects the need for increasing the construction of classrooms to match the growing student population. It is not surprising therefore that the burden of constructing schools is pushed to parents (see Appendix A5 for a detailed story). Based on the discussion of decentralisation theory above, this study argues that if the government empowered and supported the district councils to take over the management of local schools, some education sector challenges such as building school could have been reduced.

The NESP (2008–17) explains that the Ministry of Education and Sports aims to achieve 100% enrolment in schools. Kadzamira (2006) points out that there is a challenge of sustaining enrolment numbers from primary to secondary schools' in Malawi due to insufficient school infrastructures. The NESP does not provide convincing clues as to how this challenge is going to be addressed so that the 100% enrolment can be achieved. Instead the NESP is advancing the same action plans that have not helped to deal with the problem of increased student numbers since the 1990s. For example, in 1993/94 the last year when primary schools demanded fees, enrolment was 1,895,423. In 1994 free primary education was implemented resulting in 2,860,819 pupils enrolled in the 1995/96 school year; representing an increase of 66.2% (EMIS 2003). Enrolment further increased

in the 2012/13 school year to 4,497,541, an increase of 42.1%. However, despite such increases the problem of low enrolment in primary schools remains. Low primary school enrolment is complicated by 5% of youth having no formal education and 57% who have attained at most an incomplete primary education. Notably, 62% of Malawi youth aged 15-24 have not completed primary education (The National Education Profile 2014).

Where children complete primary school it is evident that huge numbers fail to find space in secondary schools owing to the lack of secondary schools. For example, in the 2012/13 academic year, only 6.8% of primary school graduates were provided space in secondary schools. Based on EMIS (2013) data, about 93.2% of the youth were excluded from attending secondary education (of the 4,497,541 primary school graduates, only 307,216 students continued in secondary school). It is argued in this study therefore that the Malawi education system is biased towards primary education. Such bias leads to a bottleneck at the secondary level as secondary schools are unable to absorb the growing number of graduates from primary education. Furthermore, the emphasis on primary education is inadequate for the creation of qualified human capital necessary to participate in national development programmes. Malawi's capacity for developing human capital would seem to be also undermined by low university enrolment which according to Nyondo (2016), is the lowest in the world at 0.4%, which means only 80 students per 100,000 enrol for higher education.

The problem of access and equity affects student groups in different ways. For example, orphans are the group most likely to drop out of school as argued by Reijer and Chalimba (2000) and NESP (2008-17). It is also known that one million orphans, mostly children, struggle to access public services (Malawi HIV and AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2008). The ultimate meaning of orphans failing to access education is that the overall experience of an already marginalized group is made even worse. There could be several reasons why the government has failed to address the problem of orphans not accessing education, but what is unclear is how the NESP launched in 2008 intended to address this problem comprehensively or what its current plans are to do (NESP 2008-17). Another group who experience difficulties accessing education are children affected by HIV/AIDS which is 12% of the population. Yet there is no

comprehensive discussion in the NESP (2008-17) of the impact of HIV/AIDS on education equity and access. The problem of HIV/AIDS in the education sector should have been taken seriously by the government, especially as Ponje (2014) reports that government officers misappropriated funds meant for HIV/AIDS programmes that included schools.

A key factor affecting education access and equity, especially for girls, is culture as argued by Chilimampungu (2005), Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011) and White (2010). However, the current education policy does not address this challenge (NESP, 2008–17). This study argues that although culture is mentioned by the Malawi Government (2013) as an issue affecting the education of youth especially girls, the mere mention is not enough if the details about the specific cultural beliefs and practices remain unknown. Without such an understanding, any attempt to address the problem of culture would only deal with the ‘tip of the iceberg’ as the root causes are still hidden. This study has attempted to investigate such issues so that action plans directly deal with the longstanding cultural issues.

Educational equity and access is also affected by family size and poverty (Merrick, 2002). Merrick argues that large families could lead to some families experiencing poverty, which in turn undermines their ability to pay for essential education materials for their children. Since poverty can be too complex to address in the education policy, it would be helpful if the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development could include poverty as a factor impeding the empowerment of youth through education attendance. The identification of this problem could inform action plans to address the problem which is not the case now (Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, 2016/17).

Although NEP does not discuss bullying, Dunne et al. (2010) argue that bullying is a global problem and directly affects attendance and consequently educational equity. Dunne et al. mention sexual abuses, slapping and beatings and other forms of bullying in schools. Dunne et al. (2010:7) argue that the definition of bullying includes more than simply physical acts of violence, but also psychological forms of bullying that may be enacted through verbal or behavioural means. Just

like Malawi, Dunne argues that Ghana also has little or no research within the Ghanaian context about bullying and yet bullying is a significant issue affecting education attendance and girls are more affected than boys. That bullying is a global problem is supported by Lipsett (2008) who argues that bullying is worse in the UK than in other European countries. Lipsett states that bullying in the UK is associated with language difficulties, skin colour, race and religion. The absence of strategies to deal with bullying in Malawi's education policy may not necessarily mean that Malawi schools do not have bullying strategies. Therefore, this study has investigated the existence and implications of bullying in Malawi schools.

A conclusion that can be drawn from reviewing educational equity and access issues is that although statistics are important in illuminating the gravity of youth non-educational attendance as indicated in the NESP (2008-17), the NESP should have also included core issues underlying the problem, as argued by Weiss (2011) and Dillo (2010). Seemingly, the education sector has not utilised qualitative data that explains issues around the problems in the education sector. It is strongly emerging from this study that the government's weakness, that is, its lack of using existing data in theorizing issues and informing education policy is a critical one.

2.2.1.2 Quality and relevance; Governance and management (NESP, 2008–17)

Quality and relevance; governance and management are discussed together in this section because they both focus on teacher allocation. The Education Sector Implementation Plan of the NESP aims to reduce the national Pupil–Qualified Teacher Ratio. Under this objective, the ESIP focuses on the quality of learning and its relevance as well as the effectiveness and efficiency in the way education is delivered (ESIP, 2009–13:17). The ESIP (2009-13) quotes the Malawi Country Status Report of 2008/2009 that the Internal Efficiency Coefficient (IEC) at primary level is particularly low at 35% implying that 65% of public resources are wasted on students having to repeat the school year and student drop out (ESIP, 2009–13:17). ESIP further states that the Education Management Information System (EMIS, 2008) reported that there is a disparity in enrolment ratios between qualified teachers and pupils in rural and urban areas; the difference in the pupil–qualified teacher ratio in rural areas was 97:1 while in the urban areas it was 51:1. High pupil–teacher ratios is an example of how education policies in Malawi overlook the interrelationships of problems in their strategies to deal with education sector problems. The problem of poor rural

teacher-pupil ratio is partly due to the low motivation of teachers caused by the poor decentralisation system, as argued by Dulani (2000) and Chiweza (2010). Governance and management aims to improve the participation of local communities and the private sector in the provision of education in Malawi. Under this objective, the focus is on challenges associated with the allocation of teachers. NESP (2008-17) states that, for example, the 2008/09 Malawi Education Country Status Report revealed that in 2007 as many as 42% of primary teachers were allocated randomly rather than according to the number of students enrolled in schools. Although the current National Education Policy (2016) does not provide rural teacher allocation statistics, it argues that the allocation of teachers to rural areas is still a challenge. The report further claims that the allocation of teachers in Malawi is highly skewed towards urban areas; pupil-qualified teacher ratios in urban areas were at 46:1 compared to 86:1 in the rural areas in primary schools. The preference for urban areas is said to be influenced by a lack of government, community and private sector incentives to deploy and retain qualified teachers in rural areas. Importantly, the high pupil-qualified teacher ratio in rural areas defeats the purpose of the education policy of providing quality education as interaction between teachers and pupils becomes difficult.

Both the Policy Investment Framework and Education Sector Implementation Plan of the Government of Malawi have identified the challenges of quality and relevance as critical in the education sector. According to the ESIP, the chosen policy action plan to address this challenge is to increase teacher recruitment. However, recruiting more teachers without addressing the quality of training may not be sufficient to address the challenge. Moreover, quality education is dependent on the quality of teacher training, as motivation theory appears to suggest (Porter, 1980). Based on the same argument, quality training of teachers needs motivated students in order to gain the benefits of a quality education.

According to MIE (2014–19), all the previous education policies have missed an opportunity to address the pertinent needs of the people in Malawi. The argument advanced in MIE serves to support the argument that Hauya (1993) and Shizha (2006) make: that post-colonial education system is informed by the colonial system of education. Although Malawi is an independent state, its failure to provide quality training for its teachers undermines the policy objective of making

education a catalyst for empowerment and industrial growth (MoEST, 2008), and thereby compromises youth empowerment. Quality training combined with raising the standard of teachers from a technical level to professional practice (Anderson and Mundy, 2014) would help to address issues of unethical teacher behaviours such as engaging in sex with students (a finding discussed in chapter 4). A better understanding of their professional responsibilities could assist teachers in becoming change agents in society whereby they could provide counselling services to needy students, for example, as argued in the latest youth policy (Malawi Government, 2013). Improved professional practice would also serve to enhance youth empowerment.

Pishghadam and Meidani (2012) argue that a critical look at pedagogy has revealed that there are both destructive and constructive effects on learning. A constructive example is teacher–pupil interaction in class while lack of interaction could be destructive to the learning process. Based on the analysis of micro-level school improvement projects that emphasise building the individual and the collective capacity of educators such as principals, teachers and supervisors (Anderson and Mundy, 2014), Malawi has not been successful in this regard. However, there is evidence of macro-policy initiatives implemented from the central government where emphasis has been on infrastructure development (ESIP, 2008–13). Combination of the two would be complementary and has the potential for improving the education sector, as argued in ‘School Improvement in Developing Countries: Experiences and Lessons Learned’ by Anderson and Mundy (2014). However, Anderson and Mundy’s assertions that use of local languages would enhance learning would be difficult to apply in developing countries like Malawi where there are many local languages. Moreover, with globalisation, application of concepts in a language which is widely used for business transactions is appropriate. Furthermore, ICT education requires computers that Malawi cannot financially afford to have in its local languages. It would also be difficult to find sufficient teachers who speak the local languages of the areas where they are posted. Furthermore, some tribes are less educated and this impacts on their ability to provide enough teachers that understand their local language.

One profound feature of the NEP, NESP and ESIP is that they attempt to address too many issues which could be problematic to manage within one strategy and could be a factor contributing to problems in implementation. Consequently, this study has attempted to identify key strategic

issues for the proposed education strategy in chapter 6 as opposed to attempting to address all of them.

2.2.2 Effects of youth, decentralisation policy and the legal framework on education attendance

This section presents a review of the impact of the current youth/ education policy (Malawi Government, 2013) on the education sector, with particular focus on the attendance of young people in education. The discussion generally centres on the relevance of the policies in influencing attendance. The discussion specifically analyses the extent to which factors leading to low youth attendance have been addressed.

2.2.2.1 Malawi National Youth Policy

The Malawi National Youth Policy provides a framework for the participation of youth in personal and national development (NYP, 2013). The study of this policy became relevant because it discusses human capital creation just like the education policy. The policy has been studied with a view to identifying strategies that would enhance the education policy objectives. The NYP covers a wide range of topics including education. As argued in ‘China Investing in Youth Policy’ (Ngan-Pun et al., 2011:23), most of the issues confronting young people are deeply interrelated and best addressed through a cross-section of oral collaboration, fostering partnerships and consultation with key stakeholders. Ngan-Pun et al.’s argument serves to emphasise the value of public policies supporting each other in addressing national challenges such as youth education attendance.

An analysis of Malawi's national youth policy reveals that the policy avoids important issues such as challenges youth encounter as they strive to attend education and consequently, the policy is void of action plans to confront such challenges. Unlike the Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya youth policies that bring out specific education challenges and proposed action plans, the Malawi youth policy appears generic and as the issues raised lack details that would lead to a more direct identification of action plans to address them.

Mumba et al. (2015) argues that Zambian youth policy disaggregates the youths into 16 different cohorts such as youth in school, out of school, disabled and female, in order to ensure that development of the youth is inclusive and interventions are targeted towards specific subgroups.

By disaggregating the youth it is possible to identify specific youth problems such as the impact of culture on female education. Zimbabwe youth policy (2014:22) discusses the identification and establishment of adequate and valid linkages between education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, culture, sport and recreation activities. The specificity of the links could provide an opportunity to identify specific challenges making it easier to formulate action plans; a feature missing in the Malawi youth policy. Uganda Youth and Public Policy (2015), provides a good example of how issues in youth policy enhances the achievement of objectives of the education policy. Although the Malawi youth policy identifies culture as an impediment to female education, there are no action plans to address the challenge. Unlike the Malawi youth policy, the Uganda policy specifically argues that culture and religion have both positive and negative influence on youth development and proposes that the country should come up with strategies to implement only the positive aspects of culture and religion. However, the Kenya youth policy (2006) also needs strengthening as it argues that culture should be respected without critically discussing its negative implications on female education. This does not mean that the culture in Kenya has no implications on female education as the same policy recognises that girls drop out of school due to pregnancy; some of the reasons for early pregnancies in Kenya is due to culture as argued by Kisaka (2015).

Based on the review of the Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya youth policies, it is argued that the Malawi youth policy needs strengthening and synchronising with other public policies such as the education policy if it is to support the youth attendance in education and empowerment.

2.2.2.2 Decentralisation policy

Decentralisation is considered salient in improving the delivery of education services by creating a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development at the local level, which would facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision-making (MoEST, 2010:2).

While Malawi's decentralisation policy refers to education as one of the focus areas, there is no discussion at all about specific education issues that could be dealt with in the decentralisation policy, other than reducing corruption in education (Poisson, 2010; see also Namukasa and Buye,

2007 below). The policy is generic and neglects specific challenges to be addressed in the education sector. The challenges that are stipulated in other policies such as the NESP and NYP are not mentioned at all. Therefore although Malawi has a decentralisation policy, its implementation betrays the objectives of improving education service delivery (Tambulasi, 2009) and youth attendance. For example, the MIE (2014–19) suggests that inspection of schools in Malawi is a problem and yet under the decentralisation programme, such inspections could be conducted at the local level, as is the case in Poland (Mazurkiewicz, Walczak and Jewdokimow, 2014). Mazurkiewicz, Walczak and Jewdokimow state that under the decentralisation programme in Poland, school inspections are conducted at two levels: external and internal evaluations. The external evaluation is conducted by qualified inspectors whose results inform the schools and other inspectors while the internal focuses on the needs of the school. Although Malawi and Poland are different in many respects, the concept of inspection as discussed could benefit Malawi as its decentralisation of the education system appears to be applicable to Malawi.

Namukasa and Buye (2007) argue that during the time of the introduction of free primary education, corruption and mismanagement of resources were challenges undermining educational provision. In view of such challenges, it appears that decentralisation became a requirement that saw some improvements being gained including improved education service delivery, water supply and extension services. What is not clear is whether corruption and mismanagement of resources were reduced (Namukasa and Buye, 2007; Poisson, 2010). According to Kayuni and Tambulasi (2009), the Malawi decentralisation policy has not achieved its objective of facilitating the improvement of the basic education sector. This is because according to Hussein (2004), decentralisation is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by donors, particularly its implementation. This is supported by Dickovic (2013) who contends that decentralisation in Malawi was rushed, without a careful analysis of how the processes would be managed due to donor pressures (which dictate how Malawi manages its education sector reforms) as argued by Chirwa (2012) in discussing *Partnerships for education in Malawi: Power and dynamics within the education sector wider approach*.

In addition to donor influence, based on Kufaine and Mtapuri, (2014), the government of Malawi

appears not to have clearly understood the concept of decentralisation in the context of Malawi's governance structure. Kufaine and Mtapuri argue that local structures lack capacity to support education sector development. Furthermore, while decentralisation could facilitate the response of the government to the shortage of schools and teachers in rural areas, it is not clear how local development structures accommodate schools in their local areas as rural schools are not aligned to local structures such as area or village development structures (Kufaine and Mtapuri, 2014). This lack of alignment means that teachers in rural areas are not effectively deployed and consequently may teach less than their counterparts in urban areas due to fatigue as they walk long distances to schools (Mulkeen 2005). School distance and teacher fatigue both negatively impact on teaching and learning.

Education for youth is part of governance obligation and requires a multi-sectored approach, as suggested by (Lloyd, 2013, Kabumba, 2005 and Mhone, 2003), but in the case of Malawi, the roles of various stakeholders in the decentralisation processes are vague and confusing. As observed by Kufaine and Mtapuri (2014), decentralisation in Malawi's basic education has led to confusion of its management as the implementation of the policy by local councils is weak leading to schools not complying with for example, regulations to meet education standards such as conducting school inspections as set by the national education policy.

Malawi, whose population is largely rural and less educated, makes civic education a requirement if their education participation as claimed in the policy is to be achieved. However, it is clear from the literature reviewed that strategic civic education about decentralisation has not been given priority by the Malawi Government. There is also an indication of a lack of local citizen participation in the management of the education sector as stipulated in the Policy Investment Framework and (Kufaine and Mtapuri, 2014). This means critical issues such as culture impacting on education attendance can be difficult to address as the custodians of culture are local communities in Malawi.

Although Chikoko (2009) argues that there is no guarantee that decentralisation can improve the quality of education, it is fair to state that decentralisation in Malawi has the potential for improving the education sector if the processes and issues requiring address are comprehensively

analysed and action planned for. Chikoko's arguments could have been influenced by the government's lack of comprehensive analysis of challenges affecting decentralisation. For example, resource allocation in rural areas has been limited triggering shortages of learning and teaching supplies. One of the possible reasons could be failure to factor in population dynamics in various development strategies. An analysis of national development strategy documents such as the Machinga District Council (2010), Country Strategy Paper (2010–14), Malawi Millennium Goals (Millennium Challenge Account)- United Nations (2009) and World Bank Group (2014) indicate that population does not feature as a critical factor in planning national development programmes. However, the Malawi Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Report (2007) discusses population as a critical variable in planning development programmes. The overlooking of population as a critical factor in planning development is an illustration of how the Malawi Government overlooks some of the important issues that require attention in the education sector, and is also an example of poor public policy synchronisation.

The education sector has also gained little from the decentralisation process because of the limited funding from central government (UNDP; UNCD; CLGF, 2011). The UNDP (2011) points out that the challenge in achieving full-scale decentralisation is caused by central government's fear of losing power. According to the UNDP, this problem is common in other countries in Eastern Africa and they are also struggling with similar challenges. It must be noted also that decentralisation does not always have positive results on education as argued by Winkler and Yeo (2007). Therefore, it would be advisable to carefully understand the undermining factors that contribute to the ineffectiveness of decentralization.

Although the proximity principle, for example by (Morris, 2013), generally argues that the closer people are to where action is, the more likely they can achieve their objectives than when they are further apart, has not been used in the case of decentralization. The argument advanced here is that it would be more effective if local governments were empowered to manage local education institutions as they are closer to where the rural education institutions are located.

2.2.2.3 Malawi legal framework

It is important to review the Malawi legal framework in this study because access to education is

a human right issue and is protected by law (MoEST and UNESCO, 2004).

The education system in Malawi has been operating based on the colonial government Education Act that was reviewed in 1962 (MoEST and UNESCO, 2004). The Malawi Education For All Action Plan indicates that the delay in reviewing the Act has brought challenges in the management of the system in the light of the new multi-party democracy dispensation. Although the MoEST and UNESCO (2004) state that the Act was reviewed to reflect the political climate and global trends of the time, six years later, Ng'ambi (2010) reported that the Act was still being reviewed. The archaic Act may not capture issues of low attendance, for example, as it may not have been an issue at the time when it was written.

The Constitution of Malawi recognises the right to education for all persons under Human Rights, chapter IV, section 25 (2006) and is re-enforced by government agencies like the courts, ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission (MoEST and UNESCO Report, 2008). Furthermore, the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Malawi (2004–2011:36) states that education is the foundation for eliminating discrimination. The National Plan further claims that under the constitution and the 1990 Joint Education for All (JEFA) Declaration to which Malawi is a signatory, the Government of Malawi is under the obligation of ensuring provision of adequate resources to the education sector in all institutions of learning. However, the NESP (2008–17) shows that about 600,000 eligible youths are still not enrolled in school and that there are poor school infrastructures and a short supply of learning materials. This implies that legal provisions have not facilitated the attendance of the youth in education. Based on the legal provisions for education, the argument being made in this study is that low youth education attendance is a serious legal and human rights violation. According to Filipovic (2010), it is unacceptable for girls not to be in school in Malawi. It is becoming clearer that Malawi has problems in implementing policies.

2.3 International education attendance challenges

By comparing challenges affecting low youth education attendance in other developing countries such as Zambia and Uganda, it has been possible to identify similar challenges and strategies used to address them, and from which Malawi can learn from as supported by Hudson (2015).

2.3.1 Zambia education attendance challenges and strategies

Zambia and Malawi as stated in chapter one, share borders and have many things in common. Some of them are culture and the history of their respective education systems. Just like Malawi, Zambia is also struggling with the challenge of youth education attendance (Kaluba; 1986; Teferra and Altibach, 2004; Chileshe et al., 2007). Furthermore, Zambia like Malawi, in her education policy also focuses on equity and access as a strategic national education challenge (Chileshe et al., 2007). Under equity and access, Zambia among other challenges, is specifically addressing a shortage of schools, learning materials and teachers. According to Moroz (2016) the problem of access is mainly at entry into primary and progression from primary to secondary and tertiary education. Clearly, Malawi and Zambia have similar challenges in the education sector, as Kaluba (1986) points out that poor access that leads to poor attendance in education is partly contributed to by lack of community participation in managing schools, poor policy implementation on the part of the government, and lack of a comprehensive policy implementation plan. As discussed in section 2.2, the challenge of access to education has been escalated by the introduction of free primary education that has not been strategically planned. As is the case in Malawi, free primary education in Zambia was influenced by the World Bank (Chileshe et al., 2007). Chileshe et al. (2007), Kadzamira and Rose (2003) argue that Malawi and Zambia introduced free primary education without critical analysis of the impact on education development. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (2014) and Chileshe et al. (2007), gender is one of the challenges affecting the education attendance of girls. According to Chileshe et al. (2007), in Zambia, the girls' retention rate is below the expected target of 100%. The completion rate (at Grade 9) of 43.12% and an analysis of the Zambia Education Policy does not offer action plans that would facilitate the achievement of the desired 100% enrolment. This could be the reason why the National Education Profile- NEP (2014) argues that approximately 39% of youth aged 24-25 have not completed primary education in Zambia. It is not clear also how the 100% attainment was calculated, as is the case with Malawi.

According to Musisi (2003) Ethiopian, Tanzanian, Ugandan and Zimbabwean universities give preferential treatment to female students in order to increase their attendance in education. Based on the current NESP (2008-17), it would appear that Malawi's education policy also favours an

increase in female education attendance. Although the national education policy supports the increase of female education, there are still low numbers of females attending education as argued in the ESIP (2009-13). According to the University of Malawi Press Release (2015/16), 48% of new students were females while 52% were males. Based on the press release, it is argued that although universities give preferential treatment to female students, males still outnumber females in public universities.

According to Mukwena (2002), unstated political reasons are the undermining reasons for the failure to decentralise Zambia's education system. Mukwena further argues that the favouring of the centralised system of government by Zambia emanates from the colonial rule. Mukwena's argument strengthens Hauya's (1993) views that the colonial legacy still influences post-colonial government education sector management. The challenge of congesting the central government with administrative responsibilities compromises the ability of government to formulate needs-based policies, as Dulani (2000) and Tambulasi (2009) suggest. Another challenge is HIV/AIDS. Grassly et al. (2003) argue that people in Zambia including in the education sector are struggling with HIV/AIDS and yet the education policy does not provide guidelines for dealing with it. HIV/AIDS undermines the initiatives for improving the education sector, as the Government of Malawi (2013) seems to suggest. Like Malawi, Zambia is also struggling to decentralise effectively and thereby depriving the majority of the rural population's valuable services such as education.

Based on the arguments in this section, it would appear that this study has the potential of benefiting Zambia as they seem to have similar education attendance challenges.

2.3.2 Uganda education attendance challenges and strategies

Uganda has been selected for review because its education system appears to have made good progress as described in its education sector policy overview paper (ENABLE, 2006) and the Uganda Revised Education Sector Plan (2007-2015). However, Uganda like other countries is also facing challenges in facilitating youth educational attendance. According to Sifuna (2000), Universal Primary Education (UPE) has decreased delayed enrolments and increased grade completion rates up to the fifth grade and its effects are especially large among girls in poor households. Yet, schools in Uganda still face further challenges in terms of low internal efficiency

and unequal quality of education. As in the Malawi and Zambia cases, the UPE policy has also achieved a low economic burden of education at the primary level for all households, regardless of their household expenditure level (ENABLE, 2006).

According to ENABLE (2006), free primary education has led to internal inefficiencies such as class repetitions which may be a pointer of poor quality education. Free primary education has also generated problems of inadequate school facilities, learning and teaching materials. To deal with the problem of limited space, the government promoted the construction of schools and teachers' houses in the remote areas (ENABLE 2006). Nthenga (2000) supports the strategic approach taken by Uganda to address the problem of shortage of classrooms. The strategy that Uganda has deployed is that of funding primary schools according to the number of pupils in the school. This can be adopted in Malawi in order to utilise the education budget effectively. However, as argued by Nthenga, the quality of the human capital being generated should also be taken into account as schools can be tempted to increase the number of pupils at the expense of quality. Kunje et al. (2009) argue that the private Makerere University has taken a leading role in the promotion of youth attendance in education. For example, the Female Scholarship Foundation has supported close to 800 disadvantaged but academically gifted female students; a position that is lacking in Zambia and Malawi's universities.

As regards to culture, Gullstrand (2009) recommends that issues of culture, for example, can be dealt with effectively by understanding a complete picture of complexities surrounding policies and implementation plans. What Gullstrand is advocating for is critical in the education sector if girls are to be supported to realise their full potential in education. While culture is recognised as an impediment to girls' education by many countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Uganda, there is no comprehensive action plan backed by a research-based strategy to deal with the challenge. Mere recognition of the challenges has not helped to solve the challenges.

2.3.3 Conclusion

The effects of donor pressure on developing countries is negatively affecting their education sector. While the FPE concept has its own merits such as increasing enrolments among the poor,

its introduction ought to have seriously considered other development forces such as the economy. Zambia, Uganda and Malawi are struggling to find resources (including teachers) to manage their entire education sector as a result of unforeseen implications of the introduction of the FPE. It is probably against this background that the Government of Malawi and UNICEF (2007) argues that for Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, abolition of free primary education could be an option.

Based on different experiences from Uganda, Zambia and Malawi, sharing of strategies that have been used to address various education sector challenges would help to enhance the objective of improving access to education for citizens of these countries.

2.4 Challenges in addressing youth education attendance

A critical analysis of local and international literature on challenges affecting the education sector in general and attendance in particular, show that the challenges are complex and can be investigated further. However, the reviews show that the major factors that inhibit the attendance of education in many countries including Malawi are linked to school, family, motivation, culture and governance factors. Arguably these factors are too broad to address in a Malawi strategy to improve youth education attendance as proposed in chapter 6.

These factors are investigated further to establish the underlying causes through an underlying cause analysis framework.

2.4.1 Underlying cause analysis framework

Although an underlying cause analysis framework is generally used in the medical and audit fields, it is a concept considered relevant to this study as it provides room for in-depth investigation and understanding of multiple viewpoints regarding reasons for not attending education. Mahto and Kumar (2008) quote Wilson et al. (1993) and define the underlying cause analysis framework as an analytical tool that can be used to perform a comprehensive, systematic-based review of critical incidents. The underlying cause analysis framework breaks problems down to manageable tasks, as demonstrated by Weiss (2011) and figure 2.2. The framework opens up to constructions of views regarding issues surrounding problems; the underlying cause identification is led by

questions such as ‘why, what and how?’ Mahto and Kumar quote Doggett, (2004) who view the why analysis as the most simplistic underlying cause analysis tool.

2.4.2 Underlying cause analysis relevance to the study

This section is particularly important because both the education and youth policies do not give confidence as regards to identification of critical underlying causes that inhibit youth education attendance in Malawi, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2. Since it would seem that the education and youth policies have been addressing the same issues for many years with no significant achievements (MIE, 2014–19), it is important that underlying causes be investigated. The underlying cause analysis framework allows for an in-depth investigation of causes that when addressed solve the complex challenges, as argued by Weiss (2011 and Dillo (2010). The lack of definitive indications for the exhaustion of the framework in identifying underlying causes leads to subjective decisions on what the underlying causes are. However, the value of exploring the underlying causes brings more benefits than the impact of the limitation of the framework (Doggett, 2004).

Figure 2.2 illustrates how the underlying cause analysis framework was used in this study. The right-hand column is an example of steps that were followed in investigating the ‘underlying causes’ of not attending education.

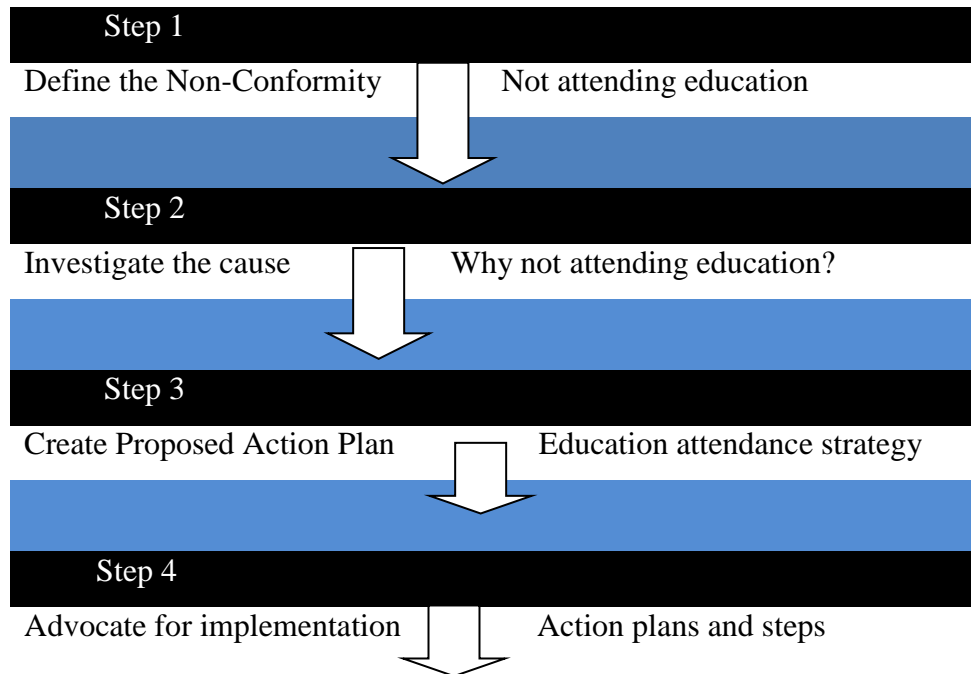


Figure 2.2: Underlying cause analysis framework

The outcome of the in-depth investigation informs the proposed education strategy in chapter 6. The strategy is designed to enhance the national education and youth policies. Therefore, it is necessary to review processes for the formation of contemporary public policies.

2.5 Processes for the formation of contemporary public policy

This section discusses debates that surround formulation of policy. It is important to understand that matters of policy can be difficult to deal with. Ball (2006) argues that people-centred policies that loosen formal systems of control and allow education infrastructure and incentives to take the market form have proven to be effective. Ball appears to favour management of the education system that is decentralized and includes the private sector. Ball's arguments are in tandem with the aspirations of the Malawi education sector as discussed in the National Education Policy-NEP (2016). The focus on policy in this study is to assess the relevance of the Malawi education and youth policies to the achievement of increased youth education attendance.

Kilpatrick (2000) argues that policy formulation involves efforts by competing interest groups to influence policy makers in their favour and that some debates centre on whether policy should be

influenced by facts or values and that public policy priority is influenced by advocacy. The arguments show the difficulties of influencing national education policy. For example, the proposed strategy discussed in this study advocates for the partnership of various stakeholders such as government that normally formulate policies based on facts and community leaders that normally are guided by cultural values. For this reason, this study engaged policy framers and relevant stakeholders such as community leaders (as study participants) to help inform the strategy (see chapter 3 for the list of participants). Their involvement in formulating the proposed education strategy was considered a strategy in a strategy to facilitate its adoption.

Based on arguments advanced in this section, it appears that policy adoption can be slow, challenging and needs a clear and simple strategy to understand and implement in order to reduce temptations to resist change. Since this study includes investigations that lead to the revelation of some politically sensitive issues, it is strategically imperative that such issues be addressed in a framework that is simple and familiar to policy makers. This study's recommendation of the education strategy is informed by this knowledge.

2.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has reviewed literature surrounding theories underpinning the study, the history of the Malawi education system, public policy implications on the education sector, challenges in implementing public policies, education systems of other countries and debates surrounding the formulation and implementation of public policies.

Based on the review of literature in this chapter, it is apparent that Malawi has produced numerous literature aimed at discussing and finding solutions to the problems encountered in the education sector. What appears to be missing are critical reflections on why efforts to unlock the problems have not proven effective. Instead, there have been policy and strategy reviews that have led to more formulation of new policies and strategies that continue to fail to capture and address the critical issues. It also appears that there could be some challenges by government in implementing theories guiding this study.

The next chapter illuminates methods and justifications for the approach used in eliciting the respondents' views as regards the problem and possible solution of low youth education attendance in Malawi.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology adopted in this study. The choice of the methodology is based on the purpose of the study which constitutes investigating underlying factors for the low youth education attendance in Malawi. The chapter covers the justification of the methodological and analytical approaches adopted to achieve the objectives of the study, research design, methods of data collection and instruments used, including tools for data analysis. This chapter outlines the researcher's reflexivity, ontology and epistemology, and explains how ethical issues and challenges arising from the study were mitigated, and concludes with a summary.

3.1 Research design

This section presents the conceptual structure within which the research was conducted, as recommended by Wicks and Whiteford (2006). Since the study is about eliciting people's views on the underlying causes of 'low education attendance', the study adopted a qualitative research design, as recommended by Mason (2002), Long and Godfrey (2004) and Thorne (2012). The choice of this research design was also informed by arguments advanced by Yin (1994) and Orodho (2003), who both argue that the type of research design is dictated by the nature of the research study, in this case a phenomenological problem. The study design is also guided by the research questions presented in chapter 1. Mertler and Charles (2005), Green, Camilli and Elmore (2006) and Saunders et al. (1985) argue that interpretive research is also categorized as qualitative research. Moreover, the qualitative approach best suits this study as issues relating to youth attendance in education can best be described by people that are directly and indirectly linked to the problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of views of respondents based on their experiences in the environment in which they live (Morse, 1994). The approach allows respondents to construct their understanding of the connectivity between the educational challenge and the underlying factors. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is powerful for understanding subjective experiences as the views expressed in the study are based on personal experience and perception about a particular phenomenon (Lester, 1999). Lester (1999:1) contends that this type of research study provides the basis for the development of practical theory, enabling it to inform, support or challenge policy and action.

The aim of the study is to establish underlying factors that lead to low youth education attendance through listening to people's views and capturing the experiences which informed their responses. The qualitative approach, which yields a variety of opinions, was considered appropriate (Carney, Joiner and Tragou, 1997) as it allowed for shared understandings of participants experiences/views to be arrived at by the researcher and the participants concerned. Statistical studies that are associated with quantitative research designs could not provide room for interaction with opinion holders that is necessary in order to understand the deep meaning of their views. This however is possible with the qualitative approach and phenomenological studies (Groenewald, 2004).

The qualitative research approach is appropriate in this study because the investigations undertaken are not based on a particular hypothesis and therefore quantification of research results is not a requirement, as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2003). The adoption of a qualitative approach was also enhanced by a review of the literature concerning the challenges of young people attending education. Although the literature review shows various statistical presentations of the problem of low youth education attendance, there are few explanations about what could have given rise to the problem. This study has not only attempted to provide the explanations but also traced the specific problems to their underlying causes. As the main product of this study is a proposed strategy to improve youth education attendance, involvement of diverse individuals in terms of backgrounds became critical for the enrichment of the contents of the proposed strategy, as argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). The strategy (outlined in chapter 6) is informed by the in-depth understanding of the experiences highlighted in the study. The diversity of views is important in this study as it gives an opportunity for the powerful and the powerless to contribute to the construction of the proposed education strategy (Hofstede, 2009–14). The involvement of the powerful and the powerless is especially important in the study as in Malawi the powerful often dominate decision-making processes, as MIE (2014–19) suggests. This study therefore argues that it provides an opportunity to produce a national education strategy that reflects the voice of the voiceless. Qualitative study is also relevant as the strategy aims at facilitating the empowerment of youth through education and training; the views of the diverse population include a mixture of

those with and without training or education; their experiences are considered necessary to inform the type of approaches needed to enhance the education and youth policy.

3.2 Research questions

This research study has one overarching question:

1. What are the underlying causes that contribute to the low youth education attendance in Malawi?

3.2.1 Sub-questions

2. How does the education sector policy strategy address the challenges of young people attending education?
3. How has the national youth policy enhanced youth empowerment programmes?
4. How has culture influenced the attendance of young people in education?
5. What can be done to improve youth education attendance?

The main and sub-questions were salient to unlocking hidden issues about youth low/non-education attendance.

3.3 Researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined by Cohen et al. (2011) as a deliberate process of self-reflecting on how the status and knowledge of the researcher can influence the quality of data of a research study. The authors argue that a researcher is part of the social world that he or she is researching. The argument advanced by Cohen et al. (2011) is that it is possible for the researcher to affect the quality of data negatively as his or her knowledge and status as perceived by respondents may contribute to their unwillingness to provide information as needed in a research study. Anderson with Arsenaut (1998), Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Basit (2010) and Cohen et al. (2011) agree that respondents should feel comfortable with the researcher in order to take time to respond to questions. This concept was particularly crucial in this study as data came from respondents' experiences. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) point out that any researcher attempting to involve people in understanding a particular phenomenon, should be aware of their perception of the researcher. The point that Bodgan and Biklen are making is that the researcher's position among people that contribute to the data collection should be explored and understood. They argue that the position of the

researcher is critical in research as it may influence the responses negatively. An example given is that when people view a researcher as knowledgeable in the subject being researched, the tendency is to hold back information or to tell the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear.

In the case of this study, the researcher's reflexivity is critical as he is a middle-class citizen and a public figure in Malawi. The researcher is a well-known radio, television and stage actor. The researcher has also been managing development programmes that include advocacy for good governance, HIV/AIDS prevention, food security, water development, women's empowerment, education and climate change for over 20 years. In order not to fall in the trap of affecting the willingness of participants to provide information, the following steps were taken:

- Following a suggestion by Alaszewski (2006), a personal diary of the researcher's activities was kept. The recording of daily events in the diary served as a reminder for the researcher not to perform plays or give public speeches that would suggest that he is knowledgeable about the issues under investigation. In this case, the researcher's diary showed no activities that would potentially affect the study data gathering process.
- Respondents were briefed that the aim of the study was purely educational and that the education strategy that the study sought to develop would help to facilitate the improvement of attendance of youth in education.
- Dress codes were particularly critical in rural areas where the majority of the people are poor and this is reflected in their clothing. Usually government officials and politicians dress in expensive clothes when they go to inform the rural poor about government programmes. In an attempt to overcome this potential communication barrier, the researcher dressed as any other ordinary rural-based Malawian.
- The researcher communicated in respective local languages to initiate dialogue and win the respondents' confidence. As language is crucial in communication, the researcher made sure that he spoke to the respondents in their own local language.
- In all the interviews, the recognition that the researcher is a public figure who acts as an advocate for the welfare of the poor facilitated open and free dialogue. However, it is recognised that some respondents may have participated because they thought the researcher could help them (see section 3.9). To discourage such thinking and to avoid

potential participants using this as a reason to take part in the study, it was made clear before participants signed their consent forms that the researcher was not in a position to help any respondent. Although interviewing participants in villages was generally straightforward as the researcher was known, he needed permission from the village headman to conduct the interviews and focus groups.

Other than taking steps to avoid bias, the researcher's knowledge about ethnicity in Malawi helped the process of mapping areas to carry out the study to avoid excluding some groups of people. It also helped to include the most neglected areas in development so that poor rural girls could be represented in the study.

3.4 Ontology and epistemology

While the questions explored in the planning phase (see chapter 1) for this study were critical for deciding the research type, the values and beliefs of the researcher are also critical as they have influence on the knowledge being contributed in this study (Mertens, 1994; Burke and Miller, 2001; Cohen et al., 2011). The ontological stance of the researcher and epistemology of this study is discussed in order to understand the interests of the researcher as they have influenced this study.

3.4.1 Ontology

Ontology is a theory of being, which influences people how to perceive themselves in relation to others and the rest of their environment (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.4.1.1 Ontological stance

The researcher's world view in this doctoral study is influenced by his background as well as the environment in which he lives. Specifically, the background and his environment include cultural upbringing, formal education and his profession.

3.4.1.2 Cultural upbringing

While Triandis and Suh (2002) argue that culture changes with time, it appears that the influence of culture outlives the cultural life span itself. For example, the researcher was brought up in an area where the cultural norm was for boys from the age of about seven years old to be initiated in ritual ceremonies (informal education) that prepare them for adult life. Some of the skills and

qualities that the researcher acquired are industriousness, volunteerism, negotiation skills, stewardship, listening and leadership including conflict resolution. While this culture is changing slowly in Malawi, its influence on the researcher's world view is noticeable. The researcher believes in voluntary work, hard work, leadership, accommodating diverse views and lobbying for justice for the oppressed. Based on the researcher's own experience, it would seem that some authors of cultural anthropology such as Yero (1991), Dybdahl (2000) and Oyserman and Lee (2008) have neglected critical aspects of analysing the impact of culture on people. These authors claim that when culture changes it also changes the way of life of the people. What actually appears to be true is that even when a particular cultural practice has been modified or stopped, the effects manifest themselves much longer after the change in the culture. Any claim that suggests that cultural change alters all behaviours of people may not be entirely correct. An example could be the researcher who still believes in the traditional way of conducting circumcision long after this cultural practice has been modified so that it is conducted in medical facilities. The argument advanced here is that the modification of cultural practices that inhibit girl education may not be done with in short term. It is the argument of this study that any cultural practice modification should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that any traits of resistance to change are addressed. However, there are certain aspects of culture which have no meaning to the researcher. For example, the researcher's culture pays little attention to the educational development of girls as the wider cultural belief is that girls ought to get married and that their future will be taken care of by their husbands. This view has been altered by the privilege of education that the researcher has experienced (see 3.4.1.3). Through his education, the researcher has come to appreciate the value of female education. In particular, it was female teachers who identified and nurtured the acting skills of the researcher which eventually led him to becoming a public figure and which proved to be a competitive advantage in job interviews. Female donor representatives encouraged and facilitated support for the researcher's undergraduate, two masters and doctoral degree education programme. Female teachers and leaders have strongly influenced his understanding of the great value of education for females.

The researcher's mother also played a crucial role of motivating him to attend school. One of the most compelling methods that the researcher's mother used to motivate and encourage him was

the telling of folk tales in the evenings before going to bed. One of the lessons in the folk tales was the benefits of learning skills while young. The folk tales were about animals such as hyenas and hares. She often concluded by saying it is better to be the hare that learned lessons when it was young than to be a hyena that refused to attend lessons. Such stories were inspirational to the researcher as a child and developed his interest in learning. Based on the roles women have played in the education of the researcher, it is his conviction that female empowerment through education would benefit both males and females.

3.4.1.3 Formal education

Having attended formal education from primary school to university level, the researcher understands the value of education in terms of development and critical thinking. The formal education experience opened up to the researcher's understanding that, given equal education opportunities, females can contribute equally to national development as well as make rational judgements for their social, economic and political welfare. The researcher's firm view is that females and males should be given equal opportunities for making choices for their lives. The researcher is convinced of the need to deal with challenges that prevent the youth from attaining their full potential in education. This understanding is based on the fact that the researcher failed to be accepted into public universities due to limited spaces. The researcher also struggled to access quality education in the rural areas where he lived. Fortunately, the researcher was sponsored by a private development agency to study in foreign universities and is now able to contrast his life with his counterparts who were unable to get scholarships. The researcher's conviction is that preventing the youth from getting formal education could be an effective unintended negative strategy for breeding social, economic and political unrest in a country. The researcher's education led to the opportunity for good employment. The work of the researcher also contributes to his way of constructing his world view.

3.4.1.4 Profession

The researcher is an actor who was also trained as a medical assistant. The researcher joined development agencies that facilitated his further education in community development and public administration. He has attained two master's degrees in strategic management and international development. These education qualifications have facilitated his exposure to the outside world.

Both the medical and development professions have raised the researcher's awareness such that he has become an individual who understands the pain of inadequate education. Working in hospitals as a medical assistant prepared the researcher to have compassion for the underprivileged and the helpless. The researcher recognised that the sick and the psychologically traumatized patients he treated were people with potential to contribute to national development. The researcher realised from experience that helping people out of their various problems is an effective way of contributing to national development. The researcher developed a deep sense of compassion and commitment to help the vulnerable. However, the path to a patient's healing required some qualities in the clinician (researcher). The researcher had to patiently listen to the problems of the patients and people requiring counselling. The researcher developed probing and counselling skills. The listening skills were not hard to come by as he received training in the ritual ceremonies as part of his cultural upbringing (see section 3.4.1.2). The researcher's involvement in surgical theatres brought an understanding that sometimes pain has to precede wellness. Furthermore, the researcher learned from surgical operations about focusing on the bigger picture and basing decisions on the value of the outcome of a process.

In development work, the researcher has been involved in designing development programmes for vulnerable groups, such as people living with HIV/AIDS. The development programmes varied from service delivery to advocacy. Both types of development programmes involved strategies designed to achieve specific objectives. Involvement in programme design has led to the researcher becoming experienced in identifying challenges in a society and mapping out strategies for mitigation. While some authors confuse plans and strategies the researcher has practical experience that has demonstrated that a strategy consists of several interrelated plans in order to achieve an objective. The researcher's practical knowledge of strategies empowers him to critique some theoretical views of how a strategy should be designed. For example, he contradicts Rumelt's (2012) view that a strategy that pursues different objectives is not as good as coherence is undermined. The researcher's view is that a strategy may have different objectives and still achieves desirable results. What matters most are the action plans, action steps and expertise of the individuals who are involved. An example would be a strategy for reducing promiscuity among school girls. This involves different objectives; to empower the girls economically to build high

self-esteem and simultaneously to make them aware of the dangers involved in promiscuity; and then the potential implications of promiscuous behaviour such as early pregnancy. The objectives stated are different but, when implemented with relevant action plans and action steps by experts in the specific fields, the goal of the strategy is likely to be achieved. Since the researcher has been engaged in development work, he has become an advocate and expert in using action for social change frameworks. The framework follows a pattern of problem identification through a process of community dialogue for the identification of possible solutions (strategies).

The researcher is an experienced advocate who uses practical strategies to bring about change by engaging people who would be directly and indirectly affected by the desired changes. Furthermore, he believes in assessing legitimacy for any action in advocacy work. Legitimacy in advocacy is centred on trust given by people affected by the advocacy programmes, as Harrison (2002) suggests.

3.4.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, incorporating a theory of knowledge acquisition (i.e. how the knowledge comes to be known). The epistemology for this study has been shaped by the interest of the researcher to produce a strategy to improve youth attendance in education. Information that builds the knowledge is derived from multiple sources that are involved directly or indirectly in youth education. The epistemology of this study covers multiple options for solving challenges of youth education. The ultimate product of this study is a strategy for informing Malawi's youth and education public policies. The researcher believes in understanding the views of people in relation to the problems being solved for two reasons. Firstly, this is to identify views and any possible explanations or solutions about a problem. Secondly, this is to elicit support for implementation of the advocacy strategies discussed in chapter 6.

The information required in this study should help to explain the reasons for the failure of previous education policies and underlying causes of low youth attendance in education. The views of respondents will inform this study (Adler and Clark, 2003). Since this study assumes that social reality is constructed by individuals who participate in it, the study therefore adopts the epistemological doctrine of social constructivism (Corbetta, 2003). Social constructivism

emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and the construction of knowledge based on this understanding (McMahon, 1997, Derry, 1999). The theory rests on three assumptions; that knowledge is a product of human interaction, that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed phenomena and is influenced by the group/individual and their environment, and that it regards learning as a social activity. However, the social constructivism argument is weakened by the ways in which respondents' construction of their social world is influenced by the researcher's own construction (Silverman, 2005). Experience from Silverman's study also indicates that the diversity of multiple views from respondents, coupled with the honest capturing of data by the researcher, leads to the minimizing of the threat of the researcher's own construction which may or may not be in conflict with the respondents' views.

Qualitative research informed by social constructivism requires that the researcher makes explicit how the knowledge and meanings conveyed in the study were constructed and challenges encountered in construction, the attempts made to reduce researcher bias (see ethics), and an acknowledgement of the aspects informing the researcher's own knowledge construction. Thus, it was necessary for the researcher to illuminate how his background and experiences as a development worker informed his construction of the social world and the choice of methods of data collection and analysis in this doctoral study. Based on recommendations from Basit (2010) and Cohen et al. (2011), it became necessary that the researcher discuss his reflexivity (which was outlined in sections 3.3 – 3.4), and be alert to the factors (e.g. self, respondent selection/understanding of the study, location and time of data collection –discussed below) which may or may not have impacted on his conducting of the study, interpretation of the data collected and the significance/credence given to particular findings in the thesis.

3.5 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to conducting the main study in order to prepare for the main study (see Appendix L). Walliman (2005), Given (2008) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that a pilot study provides an opportunity to evaluate the relevance of instruments and methods for the main research study. Therefore, the data collection method and tools were tested in a pilot study which was conducted in February 2013 for three weeks. The aim was to

identify where the main study may not be successful and where modifications in the research instruments may be needed in order to increase the likelihood of success in the main study. The pilot study took place in five of the twenty sites of the main study and was selected to fit the purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). The five areas comprised three rural and two urban areas. The selection of the five sites was based on the understanding that the majority of Malawians live in the rural areas and that the study focuses on the education attendance of rural and urban-based youths. The selection of sites took into consideration the cultural and historical background of the potential participants as they have different cultures that influence education attendance, especially that of girls. The pilot study took into account respondent gender as this was critical in informing the study about commonalities and disparities of factors influencing both genders in attending education, alongside the different cultural configurations and diversity of the community.

The pilot study involved 80 respondents (35 females and 45 males) who represented the five cultural groups: the Yao, Lomwe and Sena from the southern region of Malawi, the Chewa from the central region and the Tumbuka from the northern region. The reason for choosing these cultural groups is to capture specific cultural inhibitive underlying causes for low education attendance. The pilot study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions (FGSs) to elicit data from the respondents. The FGSs comprised of girls and boys who were separated in some sessions and mixed in others. The intention was to have a mixed gendered group of respondents in order to elicit a diversity of opinions. A total of 20 youths were targeted and all participated in FGSs, comprising five boys and five girls, i.e. ten in rural and ten in urban areas. The FGSs took about one hour and 45 minutes while the one-to-one interviews took about one hour. Similar numbers were targeted for youths not attending school in urban and rural areas. The respondents who were interviewed during the pilot study included two NGOs (one individual from strategic level and one from operations level), two officials from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, and two officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Twelve parents (five males and seven females) representing diverse tribes and geographical areas and ten (four from urban areas and six from rural areas) were engaged in focus group discussions. There were more parent representatives from rural than urban areas because there are more people in the rural areas than in the urban areas in Malawi (Government of Malawi, 2008). There were five traditional

leaders representing each of the five cultural groups of Malawi. They participated in one-to-one interviews.

3.5.1 Participant selection

In the pilot study, the researcher selected respondents based on his conviction that they had knowledge about challenges in education attendance. All participants were selected through purposive sampling, except for the youth out of school in rural areas who were selected through snowball sampling techniques. The snowball sampling was convenient for the rural out of school youth because they were not easy to find. The selection of study participants in the pilot was deliberately done to include an equal number of males and females in order to address the issues of gender representation. However, in spite of the deliberate plan to balance gender representation, there were more male than female participants. One of the explanations for this development could be that there were more male government officials than females employed.

3.5.2 Outcomes of the pilot

The pilot study revealed that two focus group discussion groups could be effectively conducted in one day in the main study as opposed to the desired three in the pilot study. The logistics of getting to the different focus group locations proved too much to complete three sessions in one day.

Some of the focus group discussions took longer than the planned 90 minutes due to problems of illiteracy in the rural areas. It was possible to identify the illiterate respondents in many sessions as they uttered words in vernacular like “*osalembafe*”, *osaina ndi chalafe*” which means “*those of us who do not know how to write*”. They uttered these words when discussing policy issues. Some adults from rural areas also had problems understanding what the researcher wanted to know about the influence of culture on education attendance. The difficulty was caused by the fact that in some local languages, the word ‘culture’ and ‘behaviour’ are synonymous.

The pilot study exposed data collection methods and instruments that required refinement. The data collection instruments were refined by modifying interview guide questions that were not clear as they proved to carry multiple meanings in the vernacular. For example, the question on

‘how culture impacts girls’ education’ was changed to ‘how traditional practices impact girls’ education’. In Malawi the word culture especially in rural areas can mean the way people do things and may refer to certain sacred practices that cannot be discussed without seeking permission from the elders of the villages or clan.

The refinement of the data collection tools enhanced the authenticity, relevance and trustworthiness of these instruments in the main study. The pilot study further informed the main study in the management of data collection. It was evident in the pilot study that rural women preferred to remain silent in mixed groups with men; it was different in women exclusive groups as the women felt free to express themselves in a way that they felt unable to in mixed gendered groups. Although the researcher was aware that women do not participate actively in a mixed gendered group, radio programmes for the empowerment of women claimed to have changed the situation. The impression that was given was that women had started to be self-assertive and could speak out in the presence of men. However, it became apparent that women in the rural areas would not participate actively in a mixed gendered group, and that issues of culture still seem to inform what is considered ethical traditional behaviour of people in the rural areas where the interviews were conducted. Traditionally, women talk less and listen more in the presence of men. It was also evident that illiterate respondents were not as comfortable with one-to-one interviews as their literate counterparts. The illiterate respondents seemed more comfortable in focus group sessions where they supported each other in responding to the focus group topics. Further, it was observed that the rural women were uncomfortable with being recorded on tape. Although the researcher explained before the commencement of interviews and focus groups about the importance of tape recording and moreover sought prior permission (see ethics in section 3.14), rural women resisted tape recording till they were once again assured that there would not be any negative consequences resulting from their participation in the focus group interviews. They later accepted being recorded. Difficulties encountered in the pilot study helped to inform the main study as there were fewer challenges than in the pilot.

3.6 Main Study

This study took place in 20 sites which represents diverse ethnic groups, geographical settings, professions and education institutions. The rationale for the selection of different cultural groups,

diverse geographical settings and diverse classes of people was to capture the views of a wider perspective of people from different cultural, economic, social and educational backgrounds. Saliently, an emphasis on culture was informed by the researcher's knowledge of the role and prominence of culture on the lives of the rural population. It was also informed by his conviction that the education strategy to be developed from the study findings will not be comprehensive if issues of culture are not addressed.

The main study involved 341 respondents as shown in table 3.1. Below the specific target populations involved in the study are outlined. As argued by Babbie (2007), defining the population as subjects, phenomena or activities which the researcher wishes to research is important in order to establish new knowledge. The study population includes:

- a) Urban and rural youth both in and out of school, universities and colleges.
- b) Urban and rural based parents and community members.
- c) Head teachers in primary and secondary schools.
- d) Teachers in primary and secondary schools, university and college lecturers.
- e) School Committee members from public and private schools.
- f) Private school owners of both primary and secondary schools.
- g) Government officials.
- h) Traditional leaders.
- i) Literate and illiterate parents.
- j) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- k) Media companies, both print and electronic.

3.6.1 Sites of the study

This study generally took place in cities, towns and villages, specifically in schools, offices and village courtyards. Rural respondents were generally interviewed in their respective villages. They comprised of teachers from primary and secondary schools, youth in and out of school, university and colleges, traditional leaders and parents. City and town respondents comprised of NGOs, university and college lecturers, government officials, the media, primary and secondary school

teachers from public and private schools, parents and youth in and out of school, college and university.

The details on the relevance of each group of respondents to this study are presented below. The section also presents participants in terms of their power, vulnerability and levels of critical importance in the study.

3.6.2 The Youth (urban and rural)

The selection of the youth is consistent with the argument advanced by Hycner (1985) and Nachmias (2008) that an interpretation of views is best made by the people experiencing a particular phenomenon. The youth are therefore, the primary target group and can best be described as critical stakeholders in the study. It was essential to understand their educational experiences and factors influencing their educational attendance. The youth are categorized into youth in primary and secondary schools, both in urban and rural areas, youth attending college or university, and youth out of schools in urban and rural areas. In this study all groups of youth were considered by the researcher as generally vulnerable in the sense that they are victims of particular choices of government policies or cultural practices.

3.6.3 Youth out of school (not attending school)

The urban and rural youth out of school were targeted to gain insight into the factors that affected their educational attendance, the challenges they face in continuing with their education once they drop out of school and the factors that would enable them to return to school. The youth out of school in urban areas were asked to provide the reasons why they dropped out of school. In the case of the rural youth out of school, it was important to understand their views about the impact of cultural practices on their education attendance.

3.6.4 Youth in university and college

The youth in university and college comprised of males and females. However, it was particularly important to target the female university students' in order to elicit their experiences in overcoming cultural and other inhibiting factors to attend education. Both male and female college and university students were critical in this study, as they have the most experience about issues associated with education attendance. Their experiences from primary through secondary to

university have provided a much richer understanding of the inhibiting factors in attending higher education.

3.6.5 Parents

Both urban- and rural-based parents were selected in order to obtain information regarding the support they provide to their children and the challenges they face in ensuring that their children participate in education. In terms of power and vulnerability, parents that are urban-based and are working, generally command some power as some of them work in government departments that formulate and implement policies. However, their rural counterparts are generally vulnerable as they are often victims of bad governance and male-dominated cultures. The choice of the rural parents was also based on their likelihood to have experience with their children of dropping out of school. The parents were encouraged to explore the challenges beyond the well-known reasons for non-school attendance. The rural parents were targeted in order to explore and understand the unique factors related to education attendance in the rural areas, including culture in relation to girls' education. Both urban and rural parents (literate and illiterate) feature in this study as critical stakeholders (see further discussion in section 3.10.1).

3.6.6 Head teachers, teachers, college and university lecturers

This group of participants is regarded as powerful and influential in this study. All of them have attained a good education and are middle class. They are important in the understanding of policy relevance. Head teachers and teachers in primary schools were targeted to investigate the factors affecting primary education attendance. They are the custodians of school attendance registers and have experience with the reasons for non-attendance (pilot study revelation). An in-depth understanding of the underlying causes and the challenges at this level would likely facilitate the opening up of some insights into factors affecting the attendance of secondary school and tertiary levels (Wilson et al., 1993 and Kumar, 2008).

Secondary school teachers, college and university lecturers in both public and private institutions were targeted because of their knowledge, experience and interaction with pupils and students in schools, colleges and universities. It was anticipated that they would have in-depth knowledge and experience of the factors that affect attendance of the youth in university education. The university

lecturers from both public and private universities were also considered critical sources of information because they implement the government's higher education policies. Added to this, university lecturers carry out research on various development programmes and policies in Malawi. Therefore, the decision to involve lecturers became necessary in order to understand gaps in the existing education policy as well as implementation of education programmes. Eliciting lecturer perspectives on how to attract the youth to college and university study were viewed as essential in the formulation of the education strategy that this study aimed to produce.

3.6.7 Private school owners

Private school owners are mid-way between power and vulnerability. Their power comes from the premise that they make decisions for their institutions and their vulnerability emanates from their inability to participate in government policy-making decisions. Since the dawn of the multiparty system of government in 1994 there has been a steady growth of private schools in Malawi. Therefore, it was relevant to elicit views from both primary and secondary private schools regarding the problem of youth participation in education. It was also important to learn about the relevance of the private input into primary and secondary school education in complementing the government in promoting education in Malawi. The inclusion of private school owners also provided an opportunity to understand how they implement national education policy. The researcher sought to verify anecdotal reports that some private schools do not follow government policy on the management of education and also that they compromise the quality of education so that some young people with potential fail to enter tertiary levels.

3.6.8 Ministry officials

This group comprises of both powerful and critical informants in the study. Lynch (2006) and Porter (1998) argue that government officials have authority as they formulate policies. Since this research study seeks to make recommendations on how to improve the attendance of youth in education through development of a strategy, it was important to consult high-profile ministry officials who oversee the framing, implementing and evaluation of policies. Consequently, Principal Secretaries in government were targeted by the researcher in order to learn about any research that might have informed the formulation of education policies. Government officials are also better placed to understand challenges surrounding policy implementation.

3.6.9 Traditional leaders

Traditional leaders are powerful individuals as they are involved in making bylaws for their areas of jurisdiction. Traditional leaders could play a critical role in a decentralised system of managing government affairs, including in the education sector. Traditional leaders are custodians of culture and oversee community adherence to cultural norms in their areas. In most instances, girls cannot get married without the consent of the traditional leaders. The inclusion of traditional leaders provided an opportunity to understand the role they play, if any, in promoting youth education, especially for girls. Their views are critical as the education strategy developed (see chapter 6) will provide space for the traditional leaders to play a role in the promotion of youth education, particularly the education of girls. This is important as some of these leaders are custodians of cultural practices that hinder girls' advancement in education as they are expected to get married before the age of 18.

3.6.10 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also known as civil society organizations (CSOs). These are institutions of power as they provide checks and balances as regard to governance. Therefore, this group are considered critical informants in the study. The NGOs play a vital role in promoting the welfare of people in Malawi, especially the underprivileged, youth, women and the society in general. The researcher sought to learn from the NGOs about the types of education advocacy programmes carried out, their challenges and successes. There was also an expectation that as some NGOs manage schools and are involved in the implementation of education policies and strategies, they might have relevant information regarding challenges in improving youth education. Also, the NGOs were targeted in order to create a partnership for the implementation of the proposed education strategy.

3.6.11 Media companies

All media houses are in positions of power as they also provide checks and balances in governance. The media companies were targeted because they play a role as a catalyst, together with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in advocacy programmes. They also organize debates through electronic media on policy formulation and implementation and publish stories and pictures of challenges affecting the citizens of Malawi. It was important to consult the media companies

because they are informed about public policies and how they are implemented, and are knowledgeable about social, political, economic and cultural issues affecting Malawians. It is against this background that media houses were chosen in order to obtain information in relation to the objectives of this study, particularly the factors that affect the attendance of youth in education.

All participants were critical in informing the study as their views differed based on their backgrounds and locations (rural or urban). The diversity of the backgrounds enriched the outcome of the study.

3.7 Sampling techniques and participants

Sampling refers to the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study (Kumar, 1996, Babbie, 2004 and Wright et al., 2011). In this study, the following considerations were made for sampling: sampling techniques, size of the samples and type and accessibility of respondents. As a qualitative study, a non-probability sampling technique was favoured as the best fit (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, several sampling methods were used in order to identify respondents who would provide relevant information in line with the specific objectives of the study. These included purposive, random, snowball and convenience sampling techniques as recommended by Johnson and Christensen (2008). See table 3.1 for sample size targets and actual number of respondents that participated in the interviews and focus groups. The sampling methods adopted are discussed below in relation to each of the respondent groups.

3.7.1 Urban and rural youth out of school

There were some differences in the way urban and rural out of school youth were recruited for participation in this study. It became evident that the youth in urban areas were easier to locate and recruit for interviews and focus group sessions. They were mostly found in soccer and netball teams, loitering in townships and at labour offices looking for employment. However, their rural counterparts were not. The difficulty to mobilise youth out of school in the rural areas is caused by limited social activities available for the youth, while in urban areas, there are various social youth activities.

Convenience sampling (haphazard, accidental sampling) was used to identify the youth out of school in urban areas. This allowed the researcher to interview youths who were available (Morse, 1994 and Johnson and Christensen, 2004). Convenience sampling was also appropriate in view of the villages (in the study areas) which are sparsely populated. In some instances, snowball sampling (network, chain, reputational) was adopted in identifying rural youth out of school. Selection started with a single person and then the sample size gradually increased as the new contacts were mentioned (Wright et al., 2011). This technique was chosen for the youth in the rural areas as it was not easy to identify peers due to poor communication. Many of the rural areas were hilly and made cell phone network connection difficult. Castillo's (2009) argument that snowball sampling is ideal in situations where an individual or groups would identify peers for a study fitted in this context. One male and one female were initially identified by a group village headman, who is a traditional leader of three villages, and then each participant was asked to identify one more peer who then identified one more peer who in turn identified another peer and so on. The group village headman occupies a position of trust in the community. His involvement was ideal for the identification of informed respondents as he likely knows the qualities of his people.

3.7.2 Urban and rural youth in schools, college and university

The study sought the involvement of six pupils/students (3 males and 3 females) from each participating school, college and university. In the primary schools, pupils were chosen from the higher class, Standard 8, on the assumption that these respondents were mature enough to respond intelligently to the questions raised by the researcher. In Malawi's universities, some first degree courses, such as humanities, take four years. The fourth and third year undergraduate students and third year college students were selected as it was assumed that they have more experience of issues surrounding challenges in attending education than their counterparts in years 1 and 2. Simple random sampling from the list of males and females in participating schools, colleges and universities was used in order to get the needed three students for each gender. Although the sample of six appears small for a school, college and university, their views were triangulated with other respondents. Furthermore, this study, being qualitative does not generalize its results.

3.7.3 Urban- and rural-based parents, school committee members and community members

In order to identify respondents among urban and rural-based parents, school committee members and community members, convenience or accidental sampling was adopted. This involved selecting respondents primarily on the basis of their availability or accessibility (Cohen et al., 2011). A maximum of eight parents from urban and 10 from rural areas, respectively, making a total of 18 members of school committee and 20 community members were invited to attend the focus group discussions.

3.7.4 Head teachers, teachers, lecturers, government and NGO officials and media representatives

Head teachers, university and college lecturers, ministry officials, traditional leaders, NGO and media (print and electronic) representatives were picked by virtue of their position. Purposive sampling was used which involved selecting respondents for some unique purpose (Wright et al., 2011). The respondents who comprised both males and females such as head teachers, lecturers and ministry officials in the education sector and department, were purposively targeted because of their knowledge and experience of issues relating to attendance of the youth in education. The researcher considered sex, profession and geographical location of respondents' in order to identify any emerging patterns and disparities among respondents and to ensure that a variety of views were captured for enriching the study data.

In summary, Table 3.1 shows the list of participants by gender, profession, geographical location and age. It also includes sample sizes, sampling method, justification and data collection methods. The numbers for samples were decided based on experience identified during the pilot study. Although the participants were mobilized through random, convenience and snowball sampling, their numbers in the various categories and sample sizes were decided on the basis of fitness for purpose (Cohen et al., 2011). Fitness in this context refers to relevance to the study, that is selected individuals were assumed to know some information regarding the research topic, and where appropriate have specific knowledge of education and youth policies, research expertise such as university students, and leadership and advocacy expertise evident amongst for example, head teachers and NGOs.

Table 3.1 shows categories of respondents, sample sizes, sampling techniques and number of participants by data collection methods.

Table 3.1: Respondent, sampling technique and data collection method

Respondent	Sampling technique and participants attended	Data collection method and participants attended
Government officials	Purposive 10 were targeted: all participated	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 4 females and 6 males
College and University lecturers	Purposive 10 were targeted: all participated 6 college and 4 university lecturers	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 5 females and 5 males
Secondary school teachers	Purposive 10 were targeted: all participated	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 6 females and 4 males
Private school owners	Purposive 10 were targeted: all participated	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 2 females and 8 males
Primary school teachers	Purposive 10 were targeted: all attended	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 6 females and 4 males
School Committee private and public members from rural areas	Purposive 10 were targeted: 8 attended	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 3 females and 5 males
School Committee private and public members from urban areas	Purposive 10 were targeted: 10 attended	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 5 females and 5 males

Urban youth in school, college and university	<p>Purposive</p> <p>50 were targeted:38 participated</p> <p>21 girls aged 10 to 21 years including 4 university and college students;</p> <p>17 boys aged 12 to 34 years including 6 university and college students</p>	<p>5 girls and 6 boys participated in one-to-one interviews</p> <p>16 girls and 11 boys participated in 4 single sex focus groups</p>
Urban youth out of school	<p>Purposive/convenience</p> <p>50 were targeted: 43 participated</p> <p>19 girls aged 13 to 19 years;</p> <p>24 boys aged 12 years to 22 years</p>	<p>5 girls and 5 boys were involved in one-to-one semi structured interviews</p> <p>14 girls and 19 boys participated in 5 single sex focus groups</p>
Rural youth in school	<p>Purposive/random</p> <p>50 were targeted: 49 participated</p> <p>20 girls aged 11 years to 17 years;</p> <p>29 boys aged 13 to 20 years</p>	<p>7 girls and 7 boys participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews</p> <p>13 girls and 22 boys participated in 5 single sex focus groups</p>
Rural youth out of school (not attending school)	<p>Purposive, convenience and snowball</p> <p>50 were targeted: 56 participated</p> <p>22 girls aged 9 to 18 years;</p> <p>34 boys aged 10 years to 21 years</p>	<p>5 girls and 5 boys participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews;</p> <p>17 girls and 29 boys participated in 4 single sex focus groups</p>

Parents (literate and illiterate)	Purposive 30 were targeted: 24 participated 9 from urban areas; 15 from rural areas	5 (3 females and 2 males) participated in one-to-one semi-structured interviews 19 participated in 3 focus groups 10 females and 9 males
Community members	Purposive 20 were targeted: all participated	5 (4 females and 1 male) participated in one-to-one interviews 15 participated in 2 focus groups 8 females and 7 males
Traditional leaders	Purposive 40 were targeted: 31 participated	10 (5 females and 5 males) attended one-to-one semi-structured interviews 21 attended 3 focus groups 11 females and 10 males
Media houses	Purposive 7 were targeted: all participated	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 3 females and 4 males
NGOs	Purposive 13 were targeted: 6 participated	One-to-one semi-structured interviews 4 females and 2 males
Total of respondents by gender	380 were targeted: 341 participated + 2 embassy officials = 343	161 females and 180 males participated in the study
Total of respondents by methods		72 females and 73 males attended interviews 89 females and 107 males attended focus groups

3.8 Gender and age participation justification and disparity

As indicated in chapter 1, this study has focused on issues such as culture affecting the education of girls'. In order to understand the details of the female-associated challenges in attending education, women and girls were deliberately involved in the study. Despite this arrangement, more males than females took part in the study; 180 males representing 52.8% to 161 females representing 47.2% of the total respondent population participated in interviews and focus group sessions. It was established by the researcher upon inquiry, that girls are usually busier with domestic chores than boys and hence their lower numbers than boys attending the interviews and focus groups. This was generally the case in both urban and rural settings. It is salient also to note that it was easier to find females in urban areas and among literate people to participate in the study than in the rural areas and among illiterate people.

It was relevant to group student respondents according to their gender for the purpose of capturing male and female youth opinions separately on the issue being investigated. This also allowed for youth gender comparisons. It was also critical to interview females on their own as cultural practices in Malawi discourage females from being open about certain issues in the presence of men. An example is the issue of sexual abuse.

The age range for youth that participated in the study was between 10 and 35 years, which covers the school, college and university age range in Malawi; the age range also reflected the definition of youth in this study. There was however one girl who a village headman reported was nine years old and said she should be allowed to participate in the study because she had shown special interest in attending school; given the importance of the village headman in facilitating the study access in the rural areas, the participation of this young girl was allowed.

Age disparities among respondents in the focus group sessions were not an issue as the study was interested in issues affecting education attendance. Moreover, there was no evidence from the literature review that indicated that challenges of education attendance had anything to do with age.

3.9 Respondents' attendance

As shown in Table 3.1 about 90.2% of the targeted respondents participated in the study. The good attendance rate could be attributed to follow-up requests that were made on failed appointments with some respondents. It could also be due to the standing in the community of the researcher, and influence of the village headman in rural areas in particular. Furthermore, rural area attendance is generally more impressive among youth, and parents as evidenced by 105% attendance rate for youth in and out of school compared to their urban counterparts whose attendance rate is 81%; rural parents attendance rate is 62.5% while their urban counterparts is 37.5%, However, the attendance rate for government officials is almost 100% while NGO officials is 46%. The difference between urban and rural attendance rates could be attributed to commitments to other tasks; the urban populations being busier than their rural counterparts. It is easier to attain a 100% rate attendance among government officials as they are mostly confined to their offices unlike NGO officials who are often visiting projects. The researcher did not expect a 100% attendance rate as the pilot study indicated that there would be some respondents who would fail to show up due to various reasons such as illnesses and attending funerals.

Based on the level of participation in the interviews and focus groups, it strongly seemed that there was a general united interest to improve the low youth education attendance from all groups and individuals interviewed. It could also be assumed that the excitement for interview participation was facilitated by the position of the researcher: his association with community and national development in various sectors of development in Malawi. Furthermore, that the participants may have been hopeful for a chance of solutions to some of their problems. However, it is impossible to know whether this was the case or not as the respondents were not asked to indicate the reason why they had agreed to participate in the study.

It is also important to note that while respondent attendance was categorised by the main occupation of the specific respondent (e.g. lecturer, NGO, government official) the study included 38 respondents from various professions who indicated that they once worked as either primary or secondary school teachers. This means that experience from the teaching profession was not elicited from serving teachers only.

3.10 Data collection method and instruments (tools)

This section discusses methods and instruments used in collecting data from interviews and focus groups.

3.10.1 Data collection instruments/tools

Data collection involved application of a variety of tools, which included documentary review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Focus group discussions (FGDs) allowed respondents to confer, which resulted in a wide range of views addressing the same question. Below is the discussion of the data collection tools used.

3.10.1.1 Documentary review

Documentary research was used in this study in order to obtain secondary data. This involved content analysis of various recorded sources which outlined important education acts, policies and strategies utilised in Malawi education. These included journals, textbooks and official government reports. These were a major source of pertinent qualitative secondary data for this study. These document reviews entailed analysis of secondary data which, although they were not prepared specifically for the purpose of this research, supplemented information obtained through other methods such as interviews with senior officials.

3.10.1.2 One-to-one interviews

Bogdam et al. (1982), Flick (2009) and Mason (2002) argue that qualitative research data are largely captured through interviews. Interviews were relevant for this study as it was possible to ask follow-up questions in an attempt to trace underlying causes of the issues associated with low education attendance. The interviews were essential for senior staff (e.g. head teachers, policy makers, NGOs, lecturers etc.) and respondents who would not have had time to participate in focus groups, and also some of the information they shared was sensitive, of a confidential nature and it would not have been appropriate to share in public in a focus group.

In order to elicit the information needed, semi-structured interviews were used as they allow respondents some freedom to contribute their views regarding the problem being investigated. The semi-structured interview method was used because it is flexible and allows direct contact and in-

depth exploration of issues being investigated. It also makes it possible to collect multiple views and allows data to be checked for accuracy as respondents could be interviewed more than once (Berg, 2004, Blaikie, 2000, Bernard, 2000, Denscombe, 1998). Thus, in this study, semi-structured interviews using an interview guide as shown in Appendix B were used to elicit facts and opinions of key informants at national, regional and district levels. The interview guide was informed by the objective of the study. The interview guide facilitated the process of capturing data within the scope of the study needs. The interview guide also made it possible to obtain a wide range of issues around the underlying causes for low attendance of youth in education. It was also possible to obtain respondents' suggestions for improving youth attendance in education and also gaining insight on the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the education sector.

The one-to-one interviews took almost 60 minutes on average. There were 145 participants that attended the one-to-one interviews, as shown in table 3.1. During the interviews the researcher made sure that eye contact and nodding of his head was part of the strategy of engaging the respondents, as recommended by Sapsford and Jupp (2006) and Oatey (1999). Respondents were encouraged to contribute as the interviews took a pattern of conversation. Nodding of the head seemed to have a positive effect for keeping the respondents actively involved and encouraged to say more in the interviews.

3.10.1.3 Focus group sessions (FGSs)

Focus group sessions were ideal for eliciting diverse opinions from both a homogenous and heterogeneous group. They were also relevant as they provided an opportunity to elicit multiple views on a particular subject in one session. Also, they provided enrichment of responses as the participants complemented each other in the provision of responses.

As revealed in Table 3.1 there were 196 respondents that attended focus group sessions (FGSs) and a total of 26 sessions were conducted. The focus groups involved urban and rural in and out of school youth, parents and community members who were derived from 20 schools, local communities and villages. The FGSs comprised of 6 to 10 members. The intention was to hold mixed-sexed parent focus groups in both urban and rural areas. However, it was necessary to hold separate focus group sessions for women in rural areas because culturally women in the rural areas

are obliged to be reserved in the presence of men who tend to dominate over females in conversations. Therefore, it was inappropriate for women in rural areas to participate in a mixed-sex group.

As mentioned earlier in section 3.6.5, parents are particularly important in this study as Posse and Melgosa (2006) argue that teacher–parent meetings contribute to the improvement of attendance of children in school. Illiterate women/mothers were critical in this study because it has been evidenced that parents with limited education also tend to limit their children in participating in education (Valerie et al., 2011). These women’s participation in FGSs served to elicit views that are expected to help unlock challenges associated with rural education attendance.

The focus groups, unlike in the pilot study where it took longer, were completed within the 90-minute planned time. This is because some of the challenges encountered during the pilot study were addressed. Questions asked in one-to-one interviews were also asked in focus group sessions with an aim of testing whether they would produce similar or different responses, as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995). The focus group sessions provided in-depth and sometimes unique insights to the information obtained through the interviews and documentary review.

3.10.1.4 Organizing data collection

When consent for the interviews was sought, the researcher and prospective respondents agreed on the date, time and venue of interviews with the exception of the areas where convenience sampling was used to obtain respondents. All, except three of the respondents from villages asked the researcher to suggest the dates and venues. The criteria for the selection of interview dates were based on the freedom of the villagers from village activities, such as traditional ceremonies or development programme meetings. The researcher could not set the dates on his own as he feared that the interview/focus group dates would clash with other important village activities. Being flexible and willing to comply with the wishes/expectations of the village leaders it was therefore crucial to involve everyone in this important study.

3.10.1.5 Languages used to conduct the interviews and focus group sessions

Chichewa, which is the main local language in Malawi, was used to conduct most of the interviews and focus group sessions. The responses either came in Chichewa or in the local languages that the respondents felt comfortable with. The five local languages used were Yao, Lomwe, Chichewa, Tumbuka and Sena. English was used by government officials and some of the educated respondents. Some of the educated respondents opted to respond in both English and a local language because they argued that it was much easier for them to express issues about culture in their respective ethnic language(s). However, it is important to acknowledge that some words in local languages used by the respondents cannot be translated into English because there are no English equivalents. However, it was possible to present the meaning as conveyed by the respondents.

3.11 Tape recording and noting responses

Adler and Clark (2003) recommend both tape recording and note taking of responses during study interviews and focus group sessions.

3.11.1 Tape recording

Participants were informed that the interviews and focus groups would be tape recorded verbatim. Although the majority of the respondents agreed to be tape recorded, experience from the research study exposed the weakness of this method, especially in areas where illiteracy levels are high or among novice respondents. Even with careful explanation of the rationale of the research study, three individuals refused to be recorded. In those instances their responses were recorded in notepads (this is discussed further in section 3.11.2).

Just as was the case in the pilot study, participant concerns at being recorded was further evident in that two rural youth groups out of school asked to listen to the interviews to make sure that what they said was what was recorded. They were allowed to listen and reported that they agreed with what was recorded.

Despite the participant concerns highlighted above, tape recording was very valuable for capturing statements made in the interviews and focus groups as it was not easy to write down responses and keep listening attentively at the same time without missing some verbatim expressions. Verbatim recording also ensured that all the voices were captured. The verbatim records were also critical in the data analysis as they helped to provide insight into some of the sounds recorded such as respondent whispers. For example, it was noticeable that whenever an issue being discussed concerned politics, the tone would go down to whispers which the tape recorder captured. The meaning of the whispers was explained by the group members themselves as an indication that the topic being discussed is a sensitive issue (this is discussed further under notepad writing).

3.11.2 Note pad writing

The interview participants were informed that their responses would be handwritten in note pads and that the research study was for education purposes. Writing down responses was a valuable contribution in the data collection process as supported by Cohen et al. (2011). Based on the experience from the pilot study, taking notes was helpful for documenting the response of the three individuals referred to above who refused to be tape recorded. They were uncomfortable with their voices being recorded even after it was explained that the data would be for academic purposes only. In the main study it became evident as interviews and focus groups progressed that body language provided some critical data that needed to be captured. For example, in the process of attempting to trace the underlying causes, some respondents in focus groups looked at each other before giving some sensitive information related to government and politicians. Body language such as 'girls looking at each other' when some sensitive issues were being discussed was common among rural females. With time, the researcher was aware when a sensitive issue was about to be discussed. Body language was also important to capture particularly because different cultures express different body languages with different meanings. In some cultures when people are looking at each other, it means that the views being expressed are not a consensus of the group. In this case, it was helpful as it was possible to pick odd views for pursuance in some sessions.

3.11.3 Challenges in data collection

This study experienced challenges in data collection. Government bureaucracy was a key challenge. In attempting to interview people that were directly conversant with the education sector and youth development policy, the study had to grapple with a change of interview times by government officials. Some senior officers postponed the interview dates to a later date which they also later postponed. This resulted in delayed execution of the interviews. The complication of the cancellation of the interviews was that it was imperative to make another round trip of about 800 km to the capital city where government offices are situated from where the researcher resides. Thus, the research study became more expensive than planned. It was not possible to substitute the senior officers with other ministry staff without approval of the seniors. Bureaucracy also blocked junior staff from providing policy documents as permission had to be sought from higher levels of management. Bureaucracy is a critical factor to take into account in eliciting data from government ministries in Malawi, as experienced in this study. It was easier to stick to the agreed dates of interviews with the other groups of respondents as bureaucracy was not an issue as long as permission was sought in the first place from gate keepers (see section 3.14.1).

Another challenge was accessing rural areas where some roads required the use of a four -wheel drive vehicle which at times was not available. However, despite these difficulties that delayed interviews, data was eventually collected which was sufficient for this research study.

3.12 Authenticity and trustworthiness

The fact that qualitative research studies are associated with the weaknesses of reflecting the researcher's own views – subjectivism (Cohen et al., 2011, Burns, 2000 and Bryman, 2001) – makes it necessary to discuss the authenticity and trustworthiness of this study.

3.12.1 Authenticity

The outcome of this research is based on empirical data elicited from carefully selected participants to respond to the study questions. The study strictly adhered to the standard methodology of conducting research as argued by Mertens (1994) and Sullivan (2002) which involves adopting an appropriate design, using appropriate questions and also selecting respondents which fitted the

purpose of the study. Although the results of the study are based on the subjective interpretation of the researcher, the views interpreted are the constructions of opinions articulated by the study participants.

The pilot study served to illuminate areas that needed improvement to ascertain authenticity of the study and were addressed in the main study. Good planning and dealing with critical questions about the research such as the objective of the research, where it will take place, how it will be conducted, who will be involved, how the results will be disseminated prior to the implementation of the study, all contributed to the authenticity of the study. The researcher believes that the data collected were adequate and offered enough evidence to inform the proposed education strategy.

3.12.2 Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness and validity are contestable in qualitative research (Hycner, 1985). Some authors argue that it is not possible to ensure validity in research that is associated with interpretive analysis of data. Although, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that validity is the touchstone for all educational research, this study being qualitative, the term trustworthiness is used as validity is associated with quantitative studies. This study attempted to comply with research procedures that offer assurance of trustworthiness. This study sought to capture views of respondents honestly by allowing the respondents to tell their stories, and by obtaining verbatim records of the interviews and focus group sessions. The data were collected from diverse sources (interviews, focus groups and documentary sources) to ensure triangulation of data sources. The researcher's interest in developing a credible strategy for youth education motivated the avoidance of the researcher's own views influencing the study data collection, analysis or results. The data collected was carefully analysed and interpreted. The perceived meaning of respondents' views was verified with a cross-section of the respondents that participated in the study; this is discussed further in 3.13. The results of this study reflect the views of the respondents and can be said to be authentic and trustworthy in the context stated. However, the results of this study, as is the case with qualitative studies, cannot be generalized (Cohen et al., 2011, Bryman, 2008 and Sullivan, 2002). What this study has attempted to do is to ensure that other researchers should be able to see and understand the credibility of the findings.

3.13 Minimizing bias (insider research)

It is not possible to completely divorce oneself from subjectivism in qualitative studies (Sullivan, 2002 and Mertens, 1994). According to Anderson with Arsenaut (1998), Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Cohen et al. (2011), one of the challenges associated with qualitative studies is the tendency by researchers to influence the results of the study by including their own view points. Sullivan underscores the difficulty qualitative researchers experience in dealing with challenges of subjectivism while May (2002) suggests that the strategy of exploring the researcher's position is necessary (see section 3.3). Bodgan and Biklen advise that, in qualitative studies, it is critical that researchers interpret data from the emic point of view (respondents' view point) and not the etic, which are the researcher's viewpoints.

The researcher was mindful of the fact that personal opinions are inevitable but in order to obtain independent results, the researcher did not allow his educational experiences and subsequent professional employment experiences to influence the way each stage of the data collection and analysis was conducted. The researcher took his ethical obligations seriously as discussed in section 3.14.

Researcher experience in this study has indicated that the use of the interview and focus group guides, clarification of the purpose of the study, ethical considerations and honest capturing of data ensured that the results of this study are informed by the views of the respondents and documents reviewed. Transcribed verbatim interviews and focus groups were analysed (Hycner, 1985, Wallen and Fraenkel, 2003). As recommended by Berg (2001), the researcher involved a sample of respondents to verify meaning from 30% of the responses. It became necessary to verify the meaning of some data because it was discovered that some of the data could mean more than one thing to the researcher. As some of the respondents were illiterate the verification process involved reading out the meanings to the sample of respondents against the responses that were elicited during the data collection. There were some minor modifications made to the meanings as a result of the verification process. In addition, in order to ensure that the meaning of data collected was

not lost, misunderstood or misinterpreted, the local supervisor¹, being a researcher who is conversant with the research topic as well as being Malawian, helped the researcher to discuss the meanings he had derived from the study. The local supervisor read through the responses against the set of meanings as perceived by the researcher and provided guidance as to whether the meaning(s) derived from the data were fair or not. The researcher is aware that the conclusions drawn from the data were critical for informing the proposed education strategy. As the results of the study are expected to influence public policy, it was necessary to demonstrate that the issues being advanced are practical, credible and have meaning for the communities concerned.

There are arguments in research (Mertler and Charles, 2005) that suggest that it may not be possible to elicit data required for a study when a researcher comes from the same background and shares ethnicity with the respondents. While this argument has its own merit, it can also be argued that sharing the same identity with respondents also has merit. In this study, for example, the sharing of the same languages as the study respondents facilitated communication between the researcher and the respondents from the different language communities. The researcher's ability to speak six languages facilitated the interviews as well as capturing some deep-rooted meanings embedded in language expressions. Bias was further minimized as the researcher did not need to use an interpreter who might have influenced the data collection/analysis by making his/her own constructions from the constructions of the respondents (Hycner, 1985). This would have given the researcher second-hand views instead of first-hand views from the respondents. Being fully conversant with the languages spoken by the respondents, the researcher was able to avoid valuable data being lost through misinterpretation, and also from the influence of the ontological stance of the interpreter.

3.14 Ethical issues

It is important that issues of ethics are comprehensively addressed before people are involved in any research. Strike et al. (2005), Koshy (2006) and Cohen et al. (2011) argue that ethical issues

¹The local supervisor is the doctoral supervisor based in the country of residence of the researcher. He has complimentary roles of providing tutorials, coaching and marking assignments when the student is away from the UK university campus.

must be satisfied in research in order to protect vulnerable groups. The study was approved by the University of Bedfordshire's Ethics Committee and was designed using ethical guidelines developed by the British Educational Research Association (2011). The ethical procedures followed in this study are outlined in Appendix I.

In conforming to obligations for conducting research, various stakeholders and gatekeepers were consulted for permission to allow the study to take place. Qualitative inquiry brings with it special issues related to participant consent and maintenance of participant confidentiality (Richards and Morse, 2007). Data collection is governed by the basic principle that no harm should be done to the respondents or informants as a result of their participation in the study (Cohen et al., 2000). Guided by this principle, the researcher ensured that informed consent was obtained (see 3.14.1), respondent confidentiality (see 3.14.2) maintained and the right to remain anonymous and/or to withdraw from the study was made clear to respondents and respected.

3.14.1 Seeking consent

Before informed consents were sought, the researcher provided information to the respondents about the purpose of the study. The participants were informed about the study through the research project information sheet provided on the University of Bedfordshire's headed paper.

Before conducting research in villages in Malawi, permission has to be sought from the Village Head. In this study the Village Head gave consents in writing. Identities of participants were anonymous and there were no requests from village leaders for the names of the participants. Since the definition of youth in Malawi includes individuals from the age of 10 years, it was imperative that issues of gatekeeper's permission for the youth to participate in the study be addressed. Koshy (2006) argues that all participants must be notified about the purpose of the study prior to their involvement and also their permission to participate must be sought such as through letters. Parents consented on behalf of their children and youth consent was reaffirmed prior to their participation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also argue that respondents should be advised that they are free to withdraw from the one-to-one interviews and focus group sessions whenever they decide. However, none of the participants withdrew.

An attempt was made to allow for at least two weeks between the time of seeking the consent and actual day of data collection. However, the confirmed day of data collection was at times dependent on the other commitments which some respondents had. Consents that included days for the appointments were given through phone calls, letters, emails and interface meetings. All participants in the interviews provided written consent to attend the interviews while adults who were illiterate provided their consent through letters signed by people of their choice, on their behalf.

3.14.2 Privacy and confidentiality

Confidentiality and privacy were maintained during data collection and meaning of data verification. No names of participants or their location were recorded to ensure privacy (Bisit, 2010). All information that the researcher perceived to be sensitive was carefully protected from public access. For example, data was registered by numbers rather than name. This was done on the understanding that a participant should remain anonymous and that individuals are not salient features of the research (Cohen et al., 2000) but the views they convey. Interviews and focus groups were marked with a date and place of where and when they were conducted.

All the interviews and focus groups were conducted indoors except for one interview which was conducted under a mango tree designated for court hearing. In the case where interviews took place under a mango tree, privacy and confidentiality was maintained through the cordoning off of the mango tree. During the entire data collection period, there were no disturbances. The indoor data collection sessions provided assurance for privacy and confidentiality.

3.14.3 Data storage

The data collected were saved in multiple sources (digital tapes, computer hard drive and hard copies) to ensure the risk of losing data was reduced. All digital data were kept in encrypted password protected files. The passwords were known to the researcher only to ensure there was no breach of security. Documents reviewed and hard copies of interview and focus group transcripts were stored in locked cabinets accessible only by the researcher.

3.15 Data analysis

This section discusses how data for this study were analysed and presented. The data analysis for this study was informed by the perspectives of Hycner (1985), Sapsford and Jupp (1996), Silverman (2005) and Cohen et al. (2011) who argue that qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus groups need to be subjected to pragmatic content analysis in order to derive essential information from them. The process of content analysis involved categorization and classification of data into major and sub-themes. This form of thematic data analysis involved perusing the collected data and identifying information that is relevant to the research questions and objectives. The thematic analysis that led to the identification of underlying causes was achieved through:

- Participants explicitly mentioning causes and their underlying causes. This was common among the educated and government officers that include teachers, college and university lecturers, private school owners and NGOs.
- Deliberate process of tracing challenges to the underlying causes through follow up questions as indicated in section 2.4.1, participants constructed links between general causes and underlying causes to the point of saturation. At saturation point, participants either explicitly said that they could not think of any other underlying cause or the researcher made the conclusion as there was no more progress made on that particular cause.

A coding system based on themes and sub-themes that emerged were used as suggested by Mertens (1994) and Bryman (2008). Details of processes undertaken in the data analysis are outlined below.

3.15.1 Network data analysis

Manual and software tabulation of data concerning the interrelationships of the underlying causes for the low education attendance were used. Firstly, determination of inter relationships between and among underlying factors was conducted manually by placing 1 to indicate relationship and 0 indicating no relationship (See appendix M). Later, figures in the table were entered in excel spread sheet. Secondly, the spread sheet were processed by Pajek software that generated a figure that shows the complexity of the interrelationships of the underlying factors as shown in chapter 5, figure 5.1.3.16.1.

3.15.2 Transcription

There were 128 recorded files from one-to-one interviews and 22 from focus group sessions. All of the recorded interview and focus group data were transcribed. As recommended by Hycner (1985), views captured on a recorder were transcribed verbatim and transformed into typed texts. These included literal statements. Since the interview respondents provided their views in six different languages, the vernacular languages were directly translated into English by the researcher on transcription. Transcription was the most time consuming and tiring as it involved listening, stopping the tape recorder several times and writing texts. Although the researcher had listened to the recorded interviews several times in order to master the contents, it became necessary to listen to some files of the recordings more than once in order to make sure the literal statements were captured. It was however not a problem to translate the local languages directly into English because prior to transcriptions, the researcher sought the assistance of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation linguistic experts to translate statements that were made in parables or words that could not be translated into English word for word. Transcribing started in the same week that the interviews were conducted. Transcriptions took much longer than conducting interviews. It took more than a year to finalize the transcriptions. The transcriptions generated units of general meaning which were later coded to aid the data analysis as discussed in section 3.15.1. Appendix E shows two samples of a section of transcribed interviews.

3.15.3 Memoing

This process involved capturing insights, emerging themes and the meaning of the data that were deeply embedded in the expressions of some respondents. Memoing was crucial for this study as it was not possible to remember every meaning and insight captured during the interviews (see appendix D showing a sample of a data memo). As argued by Johnson and Christensen (2004), memos in this study added value to the interview and focus group data. There were expressions made while commenting on the position and roles of girls in villages that clearly showed that culture has some elements that oppress the development of females. Such an expression that carries that significant meaning in this study could only be captured through a memo as presented in appendix D. Memoing proved to be another important approach of gathering data. As argued by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000), memos became a reflective tool for the researcher's abstract thinking about challenges and opportunities associated with formal Malawi education. They also

provided the researcher with an understanding of the nature of issues surrounding young people attending or not participating in education.

3.15.4 Coding

Coding is defined by Bryman and Bell (2003) as indexing or categorizing; linking chunks of data representative of the same phenomenon. The researcher circled the coded chunks and gave names to themes. Coding was done manually based on the themes emerging from the data. Manual coding provided an in-depth understanding of the issues raised in the data, allowing the researcher to gain an overview of the results. Both interviews and focus groups had the same codes and were based on the themes that emerged from the data. The advantage of this overview is that the researcher could start to conceptualize the education strategy to be developed. The research discovered that some of the responses were different but fitted into one code. For example, respondents in one focus group session gave ‘schools are poor’ as a factor for low attendance in education while in another ‘teaching materials are not available’ was one of the responses. The ‘schools are poor statement’ was coded as ‘school factor theme’ and ‘teaching materials are not available’ was also coded as ‘school factor theme’. Since this study focuses on the underlying causes, corruption was believed to be one of the underlying causes; further coding led to another theme ‘corruption’.

The following were steps undertaken in the coding process as guided by Bryman (2008) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011).

3.15.4.1 Stage one

Stage one coding involved writing notes on the margins of the transcribed texts about issues that were relevant to the study. As part of this, the transcribed texts were read thoroughly in order to identify major themes, and unexpected emerging issues. Since coding was on the transcribed data, it meant that each individual interview and focus group according to the folders was separately managed. This approach allowed the researcher an in-depth interaction with each interview and focus group data. The advantage was that the bulkiness of the data was managed in sections according to the particular interview or focus group being coded. Since the coding was done manually, the researcher had to grapple with long sentences as manual coding produces long sentences. In some cases some data were irrelevant. However, the advantage was that there was

less data lost in the process of coding, as argued by Cohen et al. (2011). Manual coding was slow and cumbersome but the benefits of interacting with the data were rewarding as it allowed mastering of issues being raised in the data. It was possible at this point to identify chunks of words and statements that applied to more than one theme. See appendices F and G that show a sample of manual coding and issues arising from the coding process.

3.15.4.2 Stage two

In stage two, the researcher marked and highlighted key words emerging from the coding process. For example, ‘girls are oppressed’ is one of the key phrases that were identified in stage two. At this point, the focus was to understand what message the text was conveying but without being analytical. It became clear that some of the coded statements overlapped and therefore categorizing in one related theme became necessary. Although this stage was not for making interpretations, reflections on what the texts were saying led to some internal interpretations of the data.

3.15.4.3 Stage three

The text was systematically marked in order to identify overlapping statements for categorization. Since respondents from various interviews and focus groups gave in some instances similar responses on the same questions, repetitions were eliminated. Where repetitions were necessary as contexts in which the responses were given, these were not eliminated. Codes were identified and selected in relation to objectives of the study. Themes and sub-themes were identified based on repetitions and emphasis of the responses. It was possible at this stage to start identifying data reviewed in the literature but which was not addressed by any of the respondents or which emerged but was not covered in the literature review. An example is the discussion of the relevance of universities in promoting attendance of young people in education as presented in the section about the education system in Uganda. The Malawi respondents did not think of this approach. Another example that was mentioned by several respondents but which was not covered in the literature is the use of folk tales in the villages to promote school attendance.

3.15.4.4 Stage four

Coding proved useful in the critical analysis of the data. The researcher on several occasions retrieved coded data to refresh the meaning and contexts of responses. At this stage, the

interconnections between codes, applications of interpretations, understanding of data in the context of research questions became the main task. All codes carried themes and sub-themes as shown in appendices H1 and H2. The coding process produced units of meaning under specific themes.

3.15.4.5 Clustering of units of meaning to form themes

This involved developing logical clustering of the various meanings into themes that could be engaged in the data discussion and presentation. This was done to avoid forcing each meaning into a preconceived theme which would lead to the loss of some critical aspects of meaning from the data collected.

Collection, listening, reading memos, transcribing and coding of data, significantly contributed to the in-depth understanding of what the data were saying. Understanding the messages conveyed by the data was critical considering the fact that this study produced so much data and the potential was there to lose some of the significant contributions from the respondents. This did not happen as the researcher experienced detailed interaction with the data from the first day of data collection.

3.16 Inter-coder reliability

Since this study involved multiple respondents and as Cohen et al. (2011) stated that qualitative studies generate bulky data at the end of the study, the risk of inconsistency in coding could not be ruled out. This research deliberately reviewed all the codes to ensure that all symbols were coherent with the issues they represented. Consistencies in the coding pattern facilitated the identification of common themes for presentation as findings and discussion in the thesis.

3.17 Summaries of interviews, focus groups, validation and modification

Each interview and focus group was analysed. In some cases, a second interview with some of the respondents was conducted in order to verify the meaning and results of the first interview. Areas that were repeated as a result of coding were identified and corrected as part of the process of writing the data presentation and discussion sections.

The overall summary of the data analysis of the research took into consideration the contexts of the themes as recommended by Hycner (1985) and Johnson and Christensen (2004).

Figure 3.1 shows the steps followed in analysing data for this study, adopted from Johnson and Christensen (2004) with modifications to reflect how it has been used in this study.

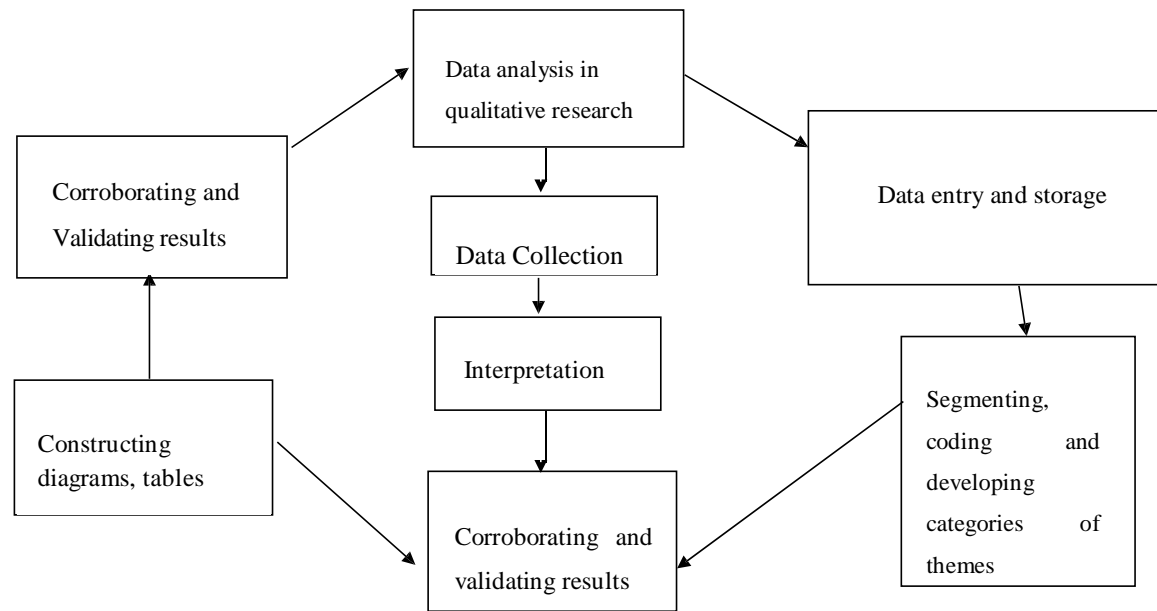


Figure 3.1: Data analysis framework

3.18 Summary of chapter

This study adopted a descriptive and co-relational research design. This study sought the knowledge and perceptions of respondents regarding the underlying factors that contribute to youth education attendance. Using a qualitative design was appropriate as the investigation of people's views is a suitable approach to gathering data in order to have an in-depth understanding of the issues and underlying factors surrounding the low youth participation in education. The target population included respondents in a number of groups, ranging from youths in and out of school groups, community members and government officials. Several sampling methods were used in order to identify respondents who would provide relevant information in line with the specific objectives of the study.

The research adopted a qualitative approach to elicit data from people employing a variety of tools which included documentary review, interviews and focus group sessions. Data collection was governed by the basic principle that no harm should be done to the respondents. The researcher adhered to informed consent, confidentiality and respondent right to remain anonymous or withdraw from the study at any time.

The data analysis involved content analysis, categorization and coding and classification of the data into major themes.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents research findings that respond to the objectives of the study and also presents other emerging issues linked to school, family, motivation, culture and governance factors. These five factors emerged from the literature reviewed and data from the respondents during interviews and focus group discussions. The diversity of respondents in this study enriched the understanding of the phenomenon of low education attendance.

4.1 Factors affecting education attendance

This section presents general problems as well as the underlying causes.

4.1.1 School, college and university factors

This section presents views of the respondents on school, college and university-related inhibiting factors covering the following issues:

- Free Primary Education (FPE) and resulting pressure on secondary, college and university education
- Poor school, college and university infrastructure (learning and accommodation)
- Poor class management (large classes)
- Pedagogy: teachers'/lecturers' attitude and other related issues
- Poor teacher training
- Frustrated teachers and poor education investments
- Bullying
- Curriculum irrelevance
- Academic boycotts in schools and universities

4.1.1.1 Free Primary Education (FPE) and resulting pressure on secondary, college and university education

One of the most cited factors that has affected education attendance at primary and secondary schools, college and university levels is the introduction of free primary education (FPE). Almost all respondents (seven government officials, eight university and college lecturers, seven

secondary school teachers, five private school owners, all 10 primary school teachers, four urban and rural school committee members comprising parents and community leaders, 70 urban and rural youth in school, 75 urban and rural youth out of school, 11 urban and rural parents, 36 community members that included their leaders, five media houses and four NGOs) while acknowledging that FPE has increased the number of pupils attending primary school, they also noted that it has caused low attendance in post-primary education. The rural and urban primary school teachers argued that FPE has compromised the quality of education in public primary schools. One of the rural primary school teachers specifically said:

“Before the abolition of primary school fees, the quality of education in Malawi was one of the best in Africa. Teachers knew their pupils by name and were aware of their individual academic challenges”.

An urban primary school teacher also argued:

“It is not possible to use interactive methods of teaching in overpopulated classes, it’s often chaotic. Teaching has turned into preaching”.

The argument by the teacher was supported by other primary school teachers and Ministry of education officials. One of the officials said:

“Teachers in public primary schools are overworked and rote teaching is the only alternative option to teach the pupils. There is no structured individual help”.

The youth attending education in primary and secondary schools as well as public universities agreed with the arguments made by the teachers. One female primary school youth said:

“Those with learning challenges are left unnoticed and eventually drop out as they find school too difficult to cope up with, especially arithmetic”.

Over half of the youth in school respondents said that they found arithmetic too difficult to understand because teachers do not spend enough time to explain methods for solving the problems. A female pupil from a primary school said:

“Our classrooms are so congested that our teachers rarely mark our assignments. We exchange notebooks for marking. I will drop out when I get to Standard 8 (13 years) as I see no future in education”.

Almost all boys and girls in primary schools from both urban and rural areas cited poor learning conditions, which include large class sizes, as factors that contribute to drop-outs. One urban secondary school male youth said:

“Classes are usually passive and some students resort to discussing some exciting issues such as sex, soccer, cookery, weddings”.

The high student teacher ratio and its impact on learning is another factor identified by all primary school teachers from both urban and rural areas. Some of them suggested a ratio of 60:1 as a better and more manageable student teacher ratio than the ratio they have now which is usually more than 100:1.

While primary schools had superfluous numbers of the schools’ capacity, university and college students argued that college, university and secondary school enrolment has fewer spaces available compared to primary school enrolment. A male university third year student said:

“I had a bright friend in secondary school who failed to make it to university because of space.”

A female college third year student argued:

“Primary schools are more supported by government and donors than secondary schools, colleges and universities. This is why access to higher education is a problem in Malawi”.

A male college third year student argued:

“Learning and teaching in my college is difficult because there are old and malfunctioning computers, libraries have old stocks of books”.

4.1.1.2 Poor school, college and university infrastructure (learning and accommodation)

Fifty-one out of 75 youth that included 20 girls attending primary education in both rural and urban areas, stated that up to Standard 5 (9-10 years), pupils sit on the floor while learning. One female rural primary school youth said:

“Some of us do not attend school during cold weather as floors are too cold for comfort”.

Girls complained about sanitary conditions which they said are not conducive to attending school. The rural girls specifically pointed out that toilets are usually wet and produce bad smells, making them very unpleasant to use. They said that it is always a challenge during menstrual periods as they need to keep themselves comfortable all the time. One primary school teacher argued:

“There have been reports about local development funds meant for building and rehabilitating toilets being embezzled by constructors and local politicians. This is why window panes are being replaced by ventilated cement vents”.

On school infrastructure, one rural primary school boy claimed that he has a friend who stopped going to school because his school does not have facilities for disabled pupils. He said in vernacular Tumbuka:

“Bakuteta kuti vipangizo vya banthu bakululemala vilipo ku sukulu. Banyithu bakulemela ali mmivikaya chifukwa bakutondeka kuti angile mmakalasi. Awo bakuyenda nimawoko bakukwanisa kunjila muvimbuzi”.

English translation:

“It is not true that there are facilities for the disabled in our schools. Many disabled young people are in their homes as the infrastructure is not conducive for their learning. Toilets are always wet and this makes those that walk on their hands fail to use the toilets”.

Two senior government officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters argued that due to the influx of pupils in primary schools, the government is failing to provide suitable infrastructure for schooling. One official further argued:

“Politics is another underlying cause because every new government changes national development plans. Continuity of well-intended national projects in the education sector suffers from personalised political ambitions”.

Seven out of 10 private school owners traced the problem of the lack of infrastructure to the inability of the government to engage the private sector in the improvement of the education sector. One private school owner said:

“Although the education policy states the value of partnering with the private sector, government does not implement the strategy for integrating the private sector in supporting the education system”.

Five school committee members were of the view that the government has shifted its priority from improving the education sector to infrastructure development. One member of the committee stated:

“There is a lot of money going for roads which either do not finish or are of poor quality, the education sector is no longer getting the lion’s share of the budget”.

With regard to university attendance, three public college and university students attributed student dropout in the country to lack of university accommodation. The youths claimed that there are shortages of hostels in the public universities. One female third year university student said:

“There are some girls who fail to pay for their accommodation and end up cohabiting with boys in private homes. Some of these girls have ended up being pregnant while some get HIV”.

Another female student said:

“I do not think that our politicians understand the value of investing in education; accommodation is a challenge for us. How can you be attentive in class when you are struggling to find a comfortable place to sleep?”

4.1.1.3 Poor class management (large class sizes)

During interviews, nine private school owners reported that there are only a few teachers available to handle the large classes in public schools. One of the private school owners argued:

“Teacher training methodologies are not responding to the prevailing classroom environment today”.

However, six senior government officials argued that due to lack of financial support, it is not usually possible to monitor and evaluate how classes are managed.

On the part of teachers and university lecturers, five primary school and secondary teachers, three university staff and 33 youth in school agreed that the introduction of democracy in Malawi has

led to the emergence of indiscipline in class among pupils and students. A female urban secondary school teacher said:

“Students are rude in class as they know that since Malawi became a democratic country, human rights, NGOs will come after us for giving them corporal punishments”.

Surprisingly, the majority of students agreed with the arguments made by the teachers. However, some students argued that some teachers are just too frustrated with low salaries to teach.

In contrast, a retired primary school teacher blamed poorly qualified teachers and insufficient teaching and learning resources. She said:

“In some cases, one teacher would have to teach 200 pupils. Large classes such as these, would end up being handled by less qualified teachers with no learning and teaching materials. This has serious consequences on the standards of teaching and learning as class management becomes an issue”.

The argument by the primary school teacher appears to agree with the views of the private school owner who also argued that poor teacher training is compounded by exceptionally large classes. These arguments contradict the views of students in section 4.1.1.9 who argued that poor teacher salaries are responsible for teachers' poor class behaviour management.

4.1.1.4 Pedagogy: Teachers' low motivation and lecturers' attitudes

During focus group sessions with urban and rural primary and secondary school teachers the common argument was that the current salary disbursement system is a source of their frustration (see also sections 4.1.1.6 and 4.1.6.2). The teachers argued that sometimes they are not paid for two months. A male head teacher who observed that teaching standards are being affected by the low motivation of teachers said:

“Government has neglected us and how do you expect teachers to teach on an empty stomach and in dirty clothes? It is embarrassing to be evicted from a house because you have not paid for rent. This is annoying. How do you teach?”

Three Ministry of Education officials revealed that the government tendency of using public funds on political programmes and corruption are part of the problem.

Almost all teachers were of the view that the government is misallocating public resources for political programmes to win votes in elections. One male rural secondary school teacher said:

“Instead of allocating funds to help address school challenges, government is allocating funds for small-scale businesses for the youth. This practice motivates youth to join politics at the expense of being in school”.

Another urban female teacher argued:

“Government is spending public funds on their political party members to conduct small-scale businesses instead of supporting the education and health sectors”.

A headmistress of one urban primary school admitted that primary school teachers are demoralised because of too many pupils in their classes whom they cannot manage. She noted:

“Teaching in primary schools is no longer enjoyable. It is a headache as you have to deal with too many children who present too many problems for one teacher to deal with”.

Parents in the rural areas expressed concern over the quality of education. A rural parent who was also a retired female primary school teacher said:

“The aim of education in Malawi is not clear. What has been observed in most cases is that teacher’s main focus has been academic results at the expense of quality. Thus, it has been equated to mean that – the better the results, the better the school/teacher”.

Responding to the underlying causes for poor attendance in public universities, a female student who was supported by her two colleagues argued that some undergraduate students in public universities are sexually abused by their lecturers. Agreeing with the female student, a male student from the same public university said:

“Some lecturers intimidate us with expulsions. Some girls are pressured to have sex with them in order to get good grades. We call these grades ‘sexually transmitted grades’. Those that refuse may be failed or expelled”.

Whereas seven out of ten university and college lecturers supported the argument of the students, three lecturers disputed this claim arguing that it is the lazy students who come up with such excuses for their failures. However, a female government official said:

“I can testify that this claim is true as I was a victim when I attended my university education. We are looking into this problem and we will address it”.

Upon inquiry with four female university students, all the students were of the view that this problem is silent in the public domain and therefore many people are not aware of it.

4.1.1.5 Poor teacher training

Almost all primary school teachers from both rural and urban public schools argued that some of their colleagues are ill prepared to teach as the government has changed their training programme. They reported that nowadays training is not sufficient and that teacher training programmes are rushed in order to address the teacher shortage problem. A male rural primary school headmaster said:

“There is a decline in school inspections. Writing of lesson plans is poorly done by most teachers and I think this is due to their poor training these days.”

A Ministry of Education official however argued:

“It is not easy to conduct refresher training sessions as there are other needs to be met such as food distribution and health services by government.”

Some teachers from the same school argued that school inspection that includes monitoring class teaching and sizes by the government stopped in 1995 after the introduction of the democratic government in 1994. Most primary school teachers from both urban and rural areas also argued that the government has not modified the teacher training curriculum to accommodate new developments that have resulted from the implementation of free primary education. One teacher said:

“One of these developments is the increase in classroom sizes. Teachers are ill prepared for the influx of pupils resulting from free primary education.”

A private secondary school head teacher in a rural area was of the opinion that the poor quality of some teachers in Malawi is due to the type of training they get. He argued:

“As a teacher, one must be equipped with skills to facilitate the process of human development. The Malawi teacher’s training syllabus focuses on academic development. I think teachers must be trained to be agents of change in society.”

In contrast, a female rural primary school teacher argued that the teacher training was too short and did not provide opportunities for trainee teachers to share their placement experiences or for their practice to be informed by theory:

“Although our training is said to be two years, it is actually less than one year as the second year we go for practicals before being posted to schools. We never get the opportunity to discuss our experiences in college as we never go back. In the past, theoretical and practical work was done simultaneously in each of the two years. Teachers had the opportunity of sharing experiences with tutors”.

4.1.1.6 Frustrated teachers and poor education investments

According to a Ministry of education official, the introduction of free primary education has exacerbated the problem of teacher pupil ratio and the low salaries that teachers receive which has led some to supplement their low salaries with additional employment. The official argued:

“There are too many pupils in primary schools for the available qualified teachers; this is due to the introduction of free primary education. Unfortunately, some teachers use afternoons for their businesses to make up for their low salaries.

The inadequacy of learning materials was cited as another major problem by all teachers, public college and university lecturers and the majority of parents.

According to the urban and rural parents, some teachers and students damage teaching and learning materials. A focus group session of parents in Chichewa vernacular reported:

“Aphunzitsi ena akumaononga zinthu chifukwa chokwiya ndi boma za malipiro awo. Komanso ana a sukulu amawalekerera akumaononga za sukulu poti amati nzaboma”.

English translation:

“Teachers destroy teaching and learning materials due to their frustration with government over their salaries. The teachers tolerate students when they vandalize school property as they say the schools are government property”.

Agreeing with this observation, government officials argued that students usually damage school property when they are not happy with catering services. However, three government officials, four media houses and two NGOs counter argued saying that issues about student welfare are usually neglected by the government.

Responding to the underlying cause of this problem, a female urban teacher said:

“It seems that government does not allocate enough budgets for teaching and learning supplies in schools. The problem is worse in rural areas where infrastructures are poor for learning.”

Supporting the contention of a shortage of teaching and learning materials a secondary school teacher argued:

“Secondary school syllabus is being poorly implemented because government has not provided enough textbooks in the schools”.

However, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development official argued that overpopulation is the underlying cause. The official said:

“The demand for supply of learning and teaching materials is increasing every day due to the ever increasing population and also partly due to other pressing needs like the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the persistent presence of hunger in the country.

4.1.1.7 Bullying

Eighteen out of 75 urban youth in and out of school including boys and girls and 70 out of 105 rural in and out of school that also included boys and girls, argued that there are indiscipline acts in schools. A significant number of youths in both primary and secondary schools cited bullying as a factor that increases students’ non-attendance in school. One rural primary out of school girl said:

“We are defenceless and choose to miss school rather than having to be bullied on the way to and from school. Sometimes it happens in school; males and senior students are the ones that bully us”.

Bullying was identified by almost all rural primary school out of school girls as a factor that contributed to their dropping out of school.

To the contrary, almost all the secondary school teachers stated that bullying stopped a long time ago in Malawi schools. They said that if there is any bullying, then it is not reported. A male rural secondary school teacher said:

“Bullying is an anti-social behaviour of the past. I do not think it is any longer there”.

However, the claim by the youth respondents was supported by two government officials who said bullying takes place in the schools and also on the way to and from school.

In rural schools, primary girls complained about torture from older boys who demand sex as payment for protection from abuse from other boys when going to and coming from school. A group of five girls who had dropped out of rural schools said in their vernacular:

“Anyamata amatigwira mabere, matako. Nthawi zina ukapusa amatha kukupanira kukhoma kuti akugone”.

English translation:

“Boys touch our breasts, hips. Sometimes if you are not careful they corner you with the aim of forcing you to have sex with them”.

The girls argued that some of their colleagues dropped out of school as a result of such pressures from the boys. The girls revealed that they do not report these tortures to teachers or parents for fear of further reprisals from the boys. This claim was supported by some younger rural boys who said:

“Older boys do abuse and bully girls. We do not report such acts for fear of reprisals from the older boys”.

Both parents and teachers reported that they have heard of such acts but did not think it was significant enough to be the cause of student drop out.

A group of three rural primary and secondary school teachers which comprised of a female primary school teacher and two male secondary school teachers, argued that the problem of bullying is a societal problem as issues of bullying are also noticed in poor families and in poor male youth relationships with their female counterparts. Bullying is embedded in Malawi culture as one of the secondary school teachers argued:

“The issue of bullying is embedded in our culture. This has to do with male dominance over women. In almost all cases of bullying, it is males bullying women or small boys.”

The other secondary school teacher asked:

“Why does the religious leader not take this issue up? My opinion is that religious leaders are also guided by culture in the way they conduct their business”.

The primary school teacher said:

“Bullying is worse among the families and youth that are very poor. I do not know why but I have noticed that poor boys are more aggressive towards their peers especially those that are well off.”

4.1.1.8 Curriculum irrelevance

Twenty-one girls from urban public secondary schools said that irrelevant subjects in school were an important issue in causing them to fail exams. They said that it is discouraging to take subjects that are not in line with market needs in Malawi. One female secondary school student said:

“I do not know why we are forced to learn about the solar system or digestive system. The teachers do not provide any background to the presentation of the subjects. Many of us just memorize to pass.”

Over half of their male counterparts cited the example of physical education as an irrelevant subject:

“We see no point in spending time in doing physical exercises instead of learning because we walk long distances to school which provides sufficient exercise”.

While primary school rural and urban teachers agreed with the observations of the youth, they blamed pressure of work for the difficulty to allocate time to engage the youth in productive discussions. A youth from rural areas out of school said in Chichewa,

“Amatiyesa ife ana. sitimafunsidwa maganizo athu ata. Ife zomaphunzira za miyalangati tili ndi migodi nza cha? Osamatiphunzitsa zolima bwanji?”

English translation:

“They regard us as children. We are never consulted for our ideas. Why do we learn about minerals as if we have mines? Why not teach us about farming?”

Some youth attributed this attitude to culture and the belief that children must be guided. However, primary and secondary school teachers revealed that they just teach from the curriculum that the government prepares. One teacher said:

“Some of the subjects such as the local language ‘Chichewa’ are boring. How can you motivate students to love education when the teacher does not like what he/she teaches?”

Parents and government officials differed in their views. Seventeen urban and rural parents accepted that they should have been discussing their children’s ambitions but they neglected to do so. Almost all respondents including government officials were of the opinion that the Malawi education system has not paid serious attention to the deficiencies of the school curriculum.

Year-3 and four public college and university students that comprised both males and females however said that their subjects are relevant but that the government fails to support them after graduation. A male student said:

“Fine Arts for example have been producing graduates who can contribute to the development of this country but government does not provide any support to the students in a way of creating such jobs.”

4.1.1.9 Academic boycotts in schools, colleges and universities

Respondents argued that there are two levels of academic boycotts. A primary school teacher said:

“Teachers in primary and secondary schools are mainly frustrated by the delay of salaries, while in universities it is due to poor funding and infringement on the academic freedoms such as free speech on issues concerning government. We cannot sacrifice our afternoons for classes instead of making money that we fail to get from government”.

Five public university and college lecturers argued that the government often wants to dictate and not to dialogue in order to resolve differences. There was a general consensus among the lecturers that the government often struggles to accept criticisms and appears uncomfortable with dissenting views. One lecturer argued:

“Politicians are not comfortable with universities discussing sensitive subjects such as reasons for revolutions in the Arab region for fear of the same happening in Malawi.”

Rural and urban primary and secondary school teachers complained that they sometimes go unpaid for up to three months. One primary school teacher said:

“As a result of boycotts, teachers effectively absent their pupils and students from learning”.

The teachers further argued that their frustrations often lead to prolonged stand-offs thereby causing incompleteness of syllabi that eventually makes it difficult for some students to pass examinations. The teachers revealed that sometimes they boycott classes to offer private teaching services to generate income as their salaries are often delayed.

A government official revealed:

“Government politicians often avoid dialoguing with lecturers and teachers as they feel too powerful to discuss with primary school teachers, for example. The cosmetic commitments to improving education standards due to political agendas is a serious unattended problem”.

Both male and female rural and urban pupils and students agreed that academic boycotts have contributed to some of the youth dropping out of school. One female urban secondary school student said:

“There are many things that happen when we are not attending school. Many of us drop out. Girls and those that struggle in class are often the victims of the boycotts such as being pregnant while at home”.

Six public college and university lecturers said they go on strike because the government makes unilateral decisions to reduce university budgets. One lecturer argued:

“Government is at fault. How can it allow delays of academic calendars up to three years?”

Another lecturer however argued that government cuts affected not just lecturers, but students, with girls being adversely affected:

“The budget cuts also affect the students as their allowances are reduced while fees are hiked. Some girls eventually get pregnant during closures and never continue”.

This contention was supported by two female university students who argued that due to long periods of boycotts, some girls do not come back due to pregnancies and also the students get challenged with poverty as the needs of their families may have grown bigger during the time they were in the university. One of the reasons cited was that some siblings may have also started school and the university students with diplomas opt to start work thereby falling short of their full academic qualification potential.

One rural male parent considering the problems insurmountable complained in Chichewa that the government needed additional support:

“Bomali liri ndi zambiri zochita ndiye akanapempha ena monga ngati anthu amane anapuma pantchito awathandize kuthetsa mavuto enawa.

English translation:

“This government is overwhelmed by needs, they should seek assistance from some of the retired officers to help them solve some of these problems”.

4.1.2 Family factors

Respondents from both individual and group interviews cited family-related issues as causing poor attendance in education. Poverty, disease/illness, overpopulation and death emerged as important factors.

4.1.2.1 Poverty caused by trade and labour exploitation

Male and female parents from urban and rural areas mentioned poverty as one of the main factors limiting the youth of Malawi from attending and completing education. The parents indicated that while there is free primary education and provision of food in some primary schools, many families, especially in the rural areas, struggle to provide learning materials such as notebooks, pencils, pens and erasers. A female urban parent stated:

“Poverty works against the opportunity for young people to attend secondary, college and university education. This is so because fees is too exorbitant for most Malawian families, especially for rural families.”

A male urban parent argued:

“Poverty is affecting all sectors of life thus creating a vicious cycle of problems; government policies are failing to deal with it”.

It was also reported that most parents especially from rural areas fail to support their children as fees go up in secondary and tertiary education.

4.1.2.1.1 Trade and labour exploitation

Adult rural respondents who are also small holder farmers that included all parents, 18 out of 20 community members, and 9 out of 10 school committee members unanimously linked their poverty and difficulties experienced in supporting their children's attendance in school to failure by the government to support community income-generating activities. The rural respondents mentioned diversion by chiefs and politicians of subsidised fertilizer meant for the poor population. As a result their harvest is usually poor. One female rural respondent said in Chichewa vernacular:

“Feteleza waulere uja muli katangale, amalandirisana olemera ndi amaina okha. Ambiri osauka ata. Timakolola pangono osakwana kudya chaka chonse. Zikakhala zoti tigulitse ndiye tinaiwala. Ndiye makobiri othandizira ana ku sukulu tiapeza kwani?”

English translation:

“There is corruption surrounding the fertiliser subsidy programme due to weak transparency and accountability systems. The fertilizer goes to the rich and the influential. Our harvest is usually not enough to feed our families for the year. We do not even think about selling. Where then do we get money to support our children in school?”

On trade, one retired rural primary school teacher argued:

“Since government liberalised trade in 1994, local and foreign traders have been exploiting us as they buy our produce at low prices”.

A focus group session argued in Chichewa:

“Ana athu sangaphunzire chifukwa anthu olemerawa ndi azungu amatibera pa mitengo ya mbewu zathu. Bomanso silimatiteteza chifukwa nawonso ali mokuba momo”.

English translation:

“Our children cannot be educated because these rich people and foreign traders cheat us on the prices of our crops. The Government does not protect us because they also are thieves”.

Another female urban parent whose arguments were supported by rural parents said:

“Although there is free primary education, we are asked to pay school funds, buy exercise books which end up being more than what we used to pay for the primary fees.”

Eight NGOs that mainly operate from urban areas however differed in their opinion about the cause of poverty. Three of the five NGOs interviewed were of the opinion that poverty is caused by poor economic policies that do not address the real problems of Malawi. The other five NGOs argued that poverty in Malawi is a result of the failure by religious groups, faith communities, the private sector and NGOs to complement government efforts to develop various sectors such as education. One NGO representative said:

“There is an apparent lack of policy to support rural families to generate income. The families grapple with various ways of getting income but they are not adequate to suffice the needs of children in school.”

The NGO representative further said that many of the rural families are poor and cannot afford to generate income to support their children in school. That is why there is high child labour as a way of generating income, rather than sending their children to school.

4.1.2.1.2 Overpopulation

Three focus group sessions comprising of five community members and 10 rural female and male youths argued that the situation of poverty is worse in the villages where illiterate people always have too many children. The respondents contended that many of the youth who are out of school in the rural areas find themselves in that situation due to failure by their parents to support them because they have very large families.

One rural girl said:

“I am in school because my uncle protected me from being forced out of school. My parents told me to drop out from school and give a chance to my brother to proceed as they could not support both of us”.

Two NGOs were of a different view as they argued that overpopulation cannot be an excuse for dropping out of school as the government has put in place family planning programmes. However, another NGO dealing with family planning argued that the government seems unable to balance its annual budgets in relation to its population. One male NGO official said:

“I wonder if government takes into account the size of population when planning development programmes. It would seem that issues about population are often neglected.”

It was noticeable that the majority of rural respondents did not support the contention that overpopulation is a critical issue requiring addressing. One female rural parent said in her vernacular; Chichewa:

“Kubalana ndi za miyambo yakale. Komanso ife amatiletsa kutenga zolera ku tchalichi. Timakhulupirira kuti ana ena amafa, kubereka ambiri kumathandiza kuti ena asale.”

English translation:

“Bearing children is very important in our culture. Moreover, our church does not support contraceptives”.

4.1.3. Motivation factors

Urban and rural young people argued that there is lack of motivation from schools and families to attend education. An overwhelming 166 out of 180 school youth comprising both males and females from rural and urban areas argued that they start to attend school for various reasons, chief among which is fun. The youth argued that due to lack of preschool preparations such as motivation talks on the value of education, many of them drop out when faced with challenges. The youth further argued that they are forced to start school without understanding the challenges they would face in school. With regard to attending school, they said they are just told “*muzapeze ntchito*” which means “*for you to find a job*”. The youth argued that they know that many educated youth are not employed. One male upper primary school student reported:

“Neither parents, teachers or government officials discuss with us challenges we face in attending education. There is also lack of forums where young people can discuss their ambitions in life.”

The youth said that they are often told to work hard in school because they will be able to get employment, whereas a male public university student argued:

“In practice, we have observed that even with university education, it is not guaranteed that one will get employment”.

Some female primary school students from both rural and urban areas reported that lack of parental assistance in writing homework contributes to their dislike of schooling as teachers seem to be too busy to assist them. Agreeing with this argument, one official from the office of the president and cabinet, and four officials from the ministry of education revealed that the government does not have a clear strategy on the motivation of pupils and students.

“Motivation of pupils and students is left to their teachers”, said one official from the Ministry of Education.

The official argued that lack of policy that focuses on motivation is a mere unintended oversight. This perspective contrasted with one male secondary school teacher in an urban area who argued:

“While it sounds logical to conduct motivation sessions in schools, it may not be practical due to the high demands for needs of large classes. Another reason is that youth are abusing drugs and alcohol.”

However, the arguments by the male teachers were contradicted by their female counterparts who counter argued by stating that the motivation sessions for the youth are usually ill prepared and lack both content and relevance. Five respondents from the media specifically argued that while the government has achieved some significant gains in sensitising and supporting people in the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS, there are still critical gaps such as psychological needs that are not addressed. This argument was further supported by an official from an NGO dealing with street kids who said:

“Education and low attendance among many of the street kids under our custody is due to psychological needs. They lack motivation. A troubled mind has proven to be the underlying cause for children running away from homes and schools”.

The NGO members further stated that there was lack of support for orphans as there are no policy strategies to deal with the problem of psychological support in schools. This argument was supported by an official from the office of the president and cabinet.

Fifty-three out of 75 young people comprising both males and females attending education from urban areas faulted the government, NGOs and faith groups for neglecting to provide psychological support to orphans. One female student said:

“I am one of the victims of the lack of psychological support services. I would have graduated from university two years ago but the death of my parents confused me.”

4.1.4. Lack of nursery schools

The majority of female rural primary school teachers were of the view that the lack of nursery schools in most parts of the rural areas negatively impacted on rural children’s interest to stay in school. The teachers were of the view that some children fail to cope with school life as the transition from home to school is drastic. One teacher said:

“Many rural primary school pupils are ill prepared when starting school as their parents are less educated or uneducated. The transition from the home environment to the school environment can be critical for children. Nursery schools facilitate that transition.”

The female urban primary school teacher’s arguments were supported by both rural and urban parents who argued that nursery schools positively influence pupils to remain in school. However, this issue proved too difficult to discuss in depth with other respondents as they claimed not to have much experience in dealing with this particular challenge.

4.1.5 Cultural factors

Cultural practices featured significantly as causes for poor school attendance particularly on the part of girls. Culture was cited as a factor leading to low youth attendance in education by almost all respondents including government officials, educationists, NGOs, private school owners and both youth attending and not attending education in both rural and urban areas.

Cultural factors in this section focus on:

- Traditional beliefs and practices (women’s empowerment)
- Globalisation

4.1.5.1 Traditional cultural beliefs and practices (empowerment of women)

All respondents agreed that in many parts of Malawi, boys are given preference over girls to attend education. Male education bias was further exemplified by a female urban secondary school teacher who grew up in a rural area who said:

“There is a culture of bias towards males regarding opportunities to attend education especially in rural areas. The rural populations believe that girls will be supported by their husbands and therefore education is not very necessary for them.”

Agreeing with the female teacher, a male private school owner argued:

“I get reports from my teachers that some girls sleep during classes; some are usually absent and do not do well in class compared to their male counterparts. Upon investigation, I found out that the girls are usually tired due to domestic chores in their homes.”

Agreeing with teachers, rural school girls said that during the day they are often too busy to read. One of the girls interviewed said:

“It is not easy for us to learn as we get tired from [having to walk] long distances to fetch water and we often sleep in class. Time for study is rarely found”.

One government official said:

“It is not easy to address cultural issues as people are defensive and sometimes angry at any suggestions to change their cultural practices. Government has failed to enforce policies that promote the empowerment of women”.

However, a female community member counter argued:

“If government were to pass a law that protects girls from such burdens, they would achieve their life aspirations of being educated”.

On culture and education, both male and female primary and secondary school teachers from urban and rural areas said that most of those who do not go on to secondary education or experience

difficulty in remaining in secondary education are adolescent girls. The reason given was that of cultural practices, as a retired female secondary school teacher argued:

“Girls are pressured to engage in ritual sexual activities. The consequences are either unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases and sometimes both.”

Five NGO officials, both male and female primary and secondary school teachers from urban and rural areas faulted public policy as it does not allow access to contraceptives in schools. An urban secondary school teacher argued:

“If girls were allowed to use contraceptives, it is possible that some of the early and unplanned pregnancies would have been avoided. The absence of a clear government policy on the use of contraceptives is a problem”.

They explained that the low availability of female condoms worsened the situation as girls cannot protect themselves from the consequences of unprotected sex. The teachers indicated that many of the girls that drop out of school due to pregnancy do not continue with school after child birth.

An NGO focusing on the culturally embedded nature of early sexual practice amongst different tribes in Malawi revealed that:

“The Lomwe tribe assigns older girls (Anzina) to train younger girls, who are usually in primary school, on how to engage in sex. Among the Yaos of Southern Malawi, boys go for initiation ceremonies called Jando where they get encouraged to undergo sexual rituals.”

The rural NGOs further stated that, in the Central region of the country, the ‘*gule wamkulu*’ or ‘*nyau*’ tradition is popular among the Chewas. The deep-rooted teachings of the nyau tradition are

viewed as a cult as it is only practised by the initiated. Others, among the initiates, take it as an avenue for earning a living as they go out to dance for a fee. The NGOs argued that some youths who undergo its teachings see no value in education and stop attending school.

Youth in school from rural and urban areas stated that there are some cultural practices that inhibit the progress of the youth, especially girls, in education. However, over half of the rural respondents, especially parents and traditional leaders, did not agree that culture inhibits the youth from attending education. One literate traditional leader said:

“After all, even college and university graduates are not getting jobs, so why bother with secondary and tertiary education?”

Even though some respondents admitted that some traditional practices do not support the promotion of the rights of girls to having an education, traditional leaders as well as some parents from the rural areas nevertheless suggested that their local cultures are better than foreign cultures that support the showing of pornographic videos and engagement in sexual activity. One of the leaders said:

“It is ironic that the government allows harmful Western cultures to distract the youth from education and yet blame the local cultures that are less harmful. Government says we teach girls about sex at a very young age. Who allows condoms and contraception in the community? What are they for? Is there an age limit on condoms?”

The traditional leader strongly suggested that instead of blaming the local cultures, the government and other stakeholders such as the churches/mosques need to identify the needs of Malawians and map the way to address them. It was also reported by one traditional leader that in

his area, communities set by-laws to punish any adult male who is found guilty of impregnating a school girl. The traditional leader said in his Chichewa vernacular:

“Mwamuna aliyense wopezeka atapasa msungwana pathupi ameneyo wanya” which means: “any man found guilty of impregnating a school girl should receive stern punishment”.

A rural female primary school teacher similarly blamed the government for ignoring the role of traditional leaders when promoting girls’ education. She argued:

“The problem is neither the cultures nor the traditional leaders but politicians who do not respect the authority of traditional leaders; they often ask them to implement policies without engaging them in decision making regarding the modification of the education prohibitive cultures. Our traditional leaders are authorities in their own right and must be respected if they have to participate in promoting girls’ education.”

The media respondents shared this view, whilst also blaming the NGOs for disregarding the importance of traditional leaders in girls’ accessing education:

“Government and NGOs neglect traditional leaders on matters regarding addressing cultures that prohibit girls from attending education.”

4.1.5.2 Globalisation

Twenty-one of the 24 parents from both rural and urban areas complained that many youth today are living a Western culture without a foundation for it. They explained that the outcome has been chaotic as the youths fail to sustain the Western lifestyle. A female urban parent cited an example saying:

“The youth strive to buy expensive Western clothes and gadgets which they cannot afford which lead some of them to resort to stealing.”

According to the parents, the youth feel that Western culture is superior to their local cultures and in the process find themselves in conflict with their parents. A female rural parent said:

“The conflict of the Western culture and the local cultures has led to some parents disowning their children. The result is that parents stop supporting the children to attend education.”

The rural parent further argued that the youth usually are disloyal to their parents as they demand to be left alone to manage their lives when they are not yet matured. A female parent stated:

“In the Malawi context, a child is a child as long as he or she has parents and elders while in the west, children are independent too early for their age due to human rights pressures. How do you support a child to attend education when he/she claims independence from you?”

On their part, one boy said:

“It is not true that Western lifestyle prevents us from attending education. It is for fun and relaxation after hard work”.

Three school committee members argued that their committees are weak so that many issues are not addressed. The members attributed the weakness of the committees to lack of policy guidance on how the committees could handle emerging issues. The members claimed that the review of the old policy is long overdue.

In a rural focus group session, 48 out of 56 male youth out of school attributed their failure to attend school to the influx of video houses in their villages. The video houses are a means of generating income. One boy said in Chichewa:

“Timaonera mavidiyo masana ndi usiku. Palibe otiletsa. Tiphunzira nthawi yanji?”

English translation:

“We watch videos during the day and night. Nobody stops us. What time can we attend to education?”

The views of youth out of school were corroborated by their in-school counterparts. Thirty-four out of 49 youths also complained that they get disturbed by video shows and other forms of evening entertainments. When asked about this problem, community members and the majority of parents defended the showing of videos as the most viable means of getting an income as cash crops do not fetch enough money to support their families. One female community member said:

“Income in many rural areas is seasonal as it is linked to agriculture production and video shows are an alternative means for continued income”.

4.1.6 Governance factors (politics, corruption, decentralisation and policy)

Under this section issues surrounding politics, corruption, decentralisation and policy emerged.

4.1.6.1 Politics

Six out of 10 government officials argued that the problem of low education attendance among the youth is caused by politicians to some extent. One of the officials said:

“These politicians focus on short-term development programmes in order to gain political votes within the five-year programme. Our politicians are obsessed with campaigns to win next elections and not fine tuning national development projects.”

The officials further argued that politicians spend time on improving sports at the expense of academic needs. The arguments by the officials were supported by 61 out of 75 youth in and out of school from both rural and urban areas who said politicians only use youth for their political gains.

Two male and one female government officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology also reported that the national development agenda changes when a new government is voted into power. One official argued:

“Change of government has meant the abandonment of some valuable education programmes. Over the years costs incurred on the abandoned education programmes are so colossal that they could fund major development education infrastructures such as schools and colleges”.

Another example of political influence was argued by a Ministry of Education official, who said:

“We have seen funds meant for building schools in specific needy areas being diverted to another area that belongs to a member of parliament belonging to the ruling party”.

There was a general consensus that some areas do not get development support including the education sector because the members of the community did not vote for the sitting president.

4.1.6.2 Corruption

According to all participants that responded within this theme, corruption was regarded as the most deep-rooted factor leading to most of the inhibiting factors of education attendance issues. All

respondents, except for three ministries of finance and development officials argued that problems rocking the ministry of education are due to corruption. A senior official in the office of the president and cabinet argued:

“Corruption issues included delays in the payment of teachers’ salaries, limited space in school, national examination leakages, the short supply of learning materials, poor school infrastructures, poverty, poor management of bursaries and long distances to schools.”

The official further argued that corruption has also caused some Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to compromise their advocacy work for an improved governance system that would address the problem of corruption.

Rural respondents comprising parents, teachers and youth in and out of school expressed their dissatisfaction with the way public resources are managed by the state. An official from a local government department revealed:

“Politicians have caused the failure to complete school buildings and consequently, about 67 youths (13 males and 54 girls) had dropped out of school due to the long distance from their homes to the nearest school. Abuse of power by weakening internal controls and transparency is the main issue”.

One of the government officials who claimed to have been involved in awarding school building contracts said:

“I usually get directives to award contracts to those favoured by the government of the day. We do not follow the public procurement policy. Nobody asks questions as there no internal controls here.”

A rural male parent in Sena said:

“Mbwenye mchitidwe wakatangale ule ungasiyika, nyatwa zile aphale ambagumana nazo pamaphunjiro awo angachepe. Koma mwatchoka ndi atchogoleri onthowo omwe timawadalira kuti angatukule jiko yino ndiwo akuthawitsa pontho dinyerozo nakapanganazo malonda awo ndikuvereri namabanja awo.”

English translation:

“Unless corruption is stopped, the problem of youth not attending education will continue. Unfortunately it is the leaders whom we trust to develop this country that are diverting funds for their business empires and luxury life for their families and friends”.

All seven media house respondents reported their belief that the government is grossly abusing public funds for their own benefit. One print media editor said:

“You do not have to live in Malawi to know that our government is abusing financial resources. It is the weak transparency and accountability systems that lead to corruption which fuel the problem of lack of learning and teaching materials”.

One female urban parent argued in her vernacular that:

“Anthu akuba ndalama m'bomawa amakhala kuti ndi mbava nkale; m'bomamu amaonekera chifukwa atolankhani amawasata. Kufuna kuthetsa kuba, tidziyamba ndi ana akadali ku sukulu osati atakula kale.

English translation:

“The people that steal public funds have been stealing before serving in government; the difference is that they are now being focused on by the media. If we want to stop corruption, we must start to educate children in school as we did with civics that led to the drop in the cases of road traffic accidents. Since the subject of civics was removed from the syllabus, you can see that there is an increase in the cases of traffic road accidents”.

4.1.6.3 Decentralisation

Only government officials reported that district councils are not allowed to open bank accounts and consequently fail to function. The official said restrictions on the opening of bank accounts make it impossible to receive funding for planned programmes. A male official said:

“Funding from the central government takes too long to reach the impact area at the local government level. Sometimes, the funding is embezzled by some government officials and contractors or suppliers of items or services.”

“There is no way decentralisation can be effected in Malawi without pressure from CSOs and the citizens, government cannot voluntarily devolve power. Another problem is that only few CSOs focus on education in their work.”

The views of the government officials were supported by two embassy and high commission officials who said that most of the districts' education sector strategic plans are not implemented due to restrictions on opening bank accounts. An embassy official said:

“Due to the failure to provide financial support to the district councils it has been difficult to deal with the challenges faced by primary schools and community day secondary schools in the districts. For example, government should consider supplying district councils with the same durable tents that are provided to Mozambique refugees for shelter and schooling to address the challenge of school buildings.

Seven government officials argued that the government is resisting devolving power to the local authorities because the concept of decentralisation does not resonate well with the way Malawi politics is managed. A retired government official and politician agreed with the argument:

“This decentralized system was like an imposition on Malawi by donors as a prerequisite for getting external aid; otherwise our leaders are not in favour of empowering the local authorities to manage the affairs that have traditionally been the responsibility of the central government”.

4.1.6.4 Policy formulation and implementation

An official from the office of the president and cabinet and members from all the electronic and print media argued that policy implementation is slow in government because there is a culture of laziness and abuse of resources including time.

Five university and college lecturers and three retired government officials in school committee members argued that policy implementation is difficult because of weak links among various public policies. One of the retired committee members said:

“Government has the tendency of dictating policies for implementation without much prior consultation. Moreover, policy reviews and evaluations are often delayed because government over depends on foreign aid for its education research and evaluations.

One female urban secondary school teacher argued:

“I doubt if government ever met to discuss the seriousness of low education attendance as there has been little emphasis on the problem in practice”.

Another senior female official from the office of the president and cabinet said:

“I heard one male cabinet minister saying that women bring losses to the national economy because they spend three months on maternity leave. Malawi cannot afford this. Moreover, almost every woman wants to have a child. We can only support a few of them”.

However, no government or any other respondent supported this argument although two female government officials, three urban female parents and six urban secondary school female youths argued that they would not be surprised if this was true as the government appears to oppress them.

Data from this section suggest that governance factors affect females and males, and rural and urban areas almost in the same way.

4.2 Effects of education and youth policies on education attendance

This section presents responses surrounding the following issues:

- Education policy

- Quota system of selecting students to attend public universities
- Creation of an elite society
- National Youth Policy
- Impact of the National Youth Policy on education attendance

Since issues of policy are technical in nature, it was not surprising that traditional leaders, youth out of school, especially from the rural areas, and some parents indicated that they were not able to contribute to this section as they claimed not to know about policies.

4.2.1 Education policy

Nine government officials, all six NGOs, 15 primary and secondary teachers, 5 lecturers and 18 parents who served in positions which required understanding of policy, were able to respond to the education policy questions in this study. The perception among the above -listed respondents was that policy implementation was difficult as financial support was often limited and in some cases not available. An urban primary school headmistress argued:

“I have the responsibility of ensuring that my teachers understand the education policy but this is not always possible as government is failing to supply enough education policy copies. We are also not involved in reviewing the education policy.”

Primary teachers reported that while education policy appears to be relevant in many ways, there are some critical areas that have been neglected. They cited the following areas as some of the missing components in education policy:

- The role of the local communities and faith groups in improving the education system in Malawi
- The policy that prohibits school drop outs from being re-admitted into mainstream education; especially girls who drop out due to pregnancies
- Re-absorption of the out of school youth who still have the potential of learning
- Standardized roles of school committees

- Incorporation of decentralisation in the management of the education sector
- The role of the private sector in improving education
- Recommended size of schools and classes.

Government officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said that the lack of funds makes it difficult to enforce policy such as monitoring and evaluating school performances. A local government official further said:

“Failure to supervise schools has led to poor quality education and gross immorality among teachers and students. There are growing incidents of drug and alcohol abuse among girls and boys in school”.

In agreement with the views of the government officials, secondary school teachers and some university lecturers reported that some of their students have mental health problems due to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. The teachers claimed that, due to large class sizes, it is not easy to trace deviant behaviour among the students. They sometimes discover such cases only when they are full-blown victims of substance abuse.

One NGO official argued that:

“The current education policy does not address the most critical problems affecting the quality of education and poor attendance in schools”.

Another NGO and a community development co-ordinator respectively highlighted a difficulty in private schools viewing students as consumers and policy omissions with regard to the role of private schools in developing behaviourally disciplined students and responsible citizens (see also section 4.2.3). They argued:

“The policy should have discussed the role and operation of the private schools because some private schools regard students as customers and neglect the importance of instilling discipline in students.”

“Private school owners need to focus their attention on the needs of the youth to develop into responsible citizens and not just making money.”

Supporting the need for students to be developed into responsible citizens, parents from urban areas who are conversant with government policies stated that the issue of human rights in Malawi has had a negative effect on the education attendance of some youth. The parents were of the opinion that issues of human rights should be considered in the context of a particular country as cultures are different. A group of parents in the focus groups agreed with a female parent who argued in vernacular saying:

“Kuno ku Malawi, makolo ambiri timatsatira zimene miyambo ndi chipemebezo chimatiphunzitsa zakulera mwana. Ife takula kukhala makolo a phindu chifukwa cha nthiyapo ndi malangizo amene akulu akulu ndi makolo amatipasa. Singachite zimenezolero chifukwa cha za maufulu a anthu.”

English translation:

“In Malawi, most parents follow what culture and religion dictate. We have grown to be responsible parents because of the whips and counsels we received from our parents and elders. You cannot do that today because of human rights.”

4.2.2 Quota system of selecting students to attend public university

The quota system is a selection system for university education that bases student selection on equality of access to public universities. The system is in contrast with that employed during the one-party rule period when selection was based on merit.

Seven government officials that included two from the ministry of education observed that ruling political parties use education development funds for political campaign purposes rather than funding university education. The ministry officials blamed low university attendance on the quota system being used by the government when it comes to selecting students for public universities. They believe that the quota system is a political strategy to win votes from the populous Southern region where they argued its youth do not work as hard as those from the sparsely populated North.

A senior official in the ministry of education argued that:

“There are many bright students especially the Tumbuka who are denied the opportunity to study in our public universities because of the quota system. The quota system is meant to favour the Lhlomwe; the tribe of the president. I am at pains to approve names of less qualified students at the expense of those who are qualified to attend university education”.

Another official from the youth ministry said:

“The northern region has traditionally produced bright students because the region is less developed and therefore has less distracting factors from studies as compared to the southern region”.

All but four secondary, college and university students were of the view that university selection should be based on merit to avoid excluding eligible students from attending education. However, one official from the office of the president and cabinet and one from the ministry of education defended the quota system as they respectively argued:

“The quota system provides an equal opportunity to all youth from all the districts in Malawi to access university education.”

“The quota system has allowed underperforming students to find places in the public universities.”

4.2.3 Creation of an elite society

A male public university lecturer argued that the Malawi government is creating an elite society at the expense of creating a middle class. The lecturer said:

“About 80% of university students are selected from private secondary schools where children of the rich attend. Teachers in these secondary schools are highly motivated as their welfare is well looked after”.

The university lecturer argued that the government is failing itself in creating skilled people that can work in public offices. He observed that many of the children of the elite migrate to rich countries after their education, leaving the majority of the children of the poor, who are not educated enough, to participate in national development.

The arguments of the public university lecturer were supported by a retired female public servant, who argued:

“Children of the rich and politicians attend private schools. This is why public schools do not get the attention of politicians as they do not relate to them directly”.

Other government officers at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology argued that since the advent of multiparty democracy, politicians diverted their attention to private schools as some of the schools are owned by the politicians. One of the officials argued:

“The children of the poor receive poor education and few make it to the public universities. The children of the rich have options of going to public or private universities”.

Agreeing with the public lecturer and government officials, one rural parent argued that although children of the rich are dominating in public and private universities, they are in the minority and cannot suffice to serve in public offices.

One urban private male secondary school teacher argued that although private schools produce high numbers of students that get selected to universities, some of the private school owners regard their students as customers and not students because they bring in money. The private secondary school teacher further argued:

“The children of the elite get the education they need to serve their nation but do not get moral values. They are children of the rich and are so respected that it becomes difficult to instil moral values required in life.”

The treatment and benefits students acquired from attending private school however contrasted with that of the rural poor as explained by a female rural primary schoolteacher who said:

“It is sad that rural areas are neglected by government. Youth and teachers in rural areas are overwhelmed with problems such as poor schools, traditional cultures, long distances to schools and poverty. All these affect their school attendance negatively.”

4.2.4 Colonial government effects

Two male and one female university lecturers, three government officials and two retired secondary school teachers were of the opinion that the post-colonial governments in Malawi have

never seriously invested in research to establish the needs of the country. The female university lecturer argued:

“Malawi’s economy is based on agriculture and yet focus on commercial farming in the education sector is low. We need, as a country to graduate from the colonial mentality that their education system is the best. I do not think that we need all subjects in the curriculum. We need total revolution in the education sector.”

A male government official also argued that Malawi uses colonial systems in many of its sectors, including education. He said:

“Many of our laws are archaic because they are adopted from the British colonial masters. There are several government statutes that are just copied from the colonial government. Our education policy revolves around the needs of the west.”

However, another private secondary school female teacher had a different opinion; she said:

“We are in a global village and it is appropriate that our curriculum should be in harmony with other countries.”

4.2.5 National Youth Policy (NYP)

This section presents views on the relevance of the NYP in relation to education attendance.

4.2.5.1 Impact of policy on youth education and development

A government official from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and youth in urban schools said:

“The youth policy is often implemented based on the dictates of the ruling political parties which often aim at benefiting their supporters.”

The government official further reported that some politicians regard handing out money as another activity for enhancing youth development. The official said that it is usually youth affiliated to the ruling party that enjoys the benefits of the policy. Government officials pointed out that the national youth policy offers an opportunity for improving the welfare of the youth as there are areas of concern that have not been discussed comprehensively. One of the officials said:

“There is need for more research on the listed challenges in the education and youth development sector as they are not comprehensive enough to enable strategic programming for youth development to take place.”

Forty-six out of 75 youth in school and 87 out of 105 youth out of school said that the national youth policy favours the out of school youth as it is easy for the out of school youth to be active in politics and thereby receive bribes and rewards from the politicians.

“One of the youth observed that the National Youth Policy does not address issues of youth education problems, unemployment for example”.

The respondents were of the view that the national youth policy has not influenced the development of the youth of Malawi positively due to its political bias towards the youth who are supporters of the ruling party.

A retired male secondary school teacher said:

“Some critical issues identified in the youth policy such as the challenge of urbanization and deviant behaviours are not sufficiently addressed. The youth policy

is struggling to address challenges which could have easily been tackled in the education sector.”

4.3 Challenges in implementing policies

This section presents the following issues:

- Limited policy enforcement
- Partially informed policy strategic plans
- Poor value from the public service
- Donor pressure
- Delayed policy reviews for teaching and teacher training
- Poor communication systems
- Alienation of local government structures

The challenges associated with policy implementation were responded to by the individuals that had read, interacted with or were involved in formulating public policies. This means that the responses were exclusively from the literate.

All government officials, primary and secondary school teachers, lecturers, NGO representatives, private school owners, school committee members and retired government officials admitted that they knew that there are challenges in implementing the education and youth policies.

4.3.1 Change of government

A retired government official who worked with the ministry of education argued:

“Malawi is being betrayed by change of national development plans by new governments. I was upset when government changed the foreign policy that affected our education programmes that was being supported by Taiwan. We lost all the funding and could not continue with the education training programmes for the youth”.

4.3.2 Limited policy enforcement

Four head teachers from urban and rural secondary and primary schools agreed that policy enforcement is a problem, as one of them argued:

“Due to lack of funds for school inspection and monitoring of what goes in classrooms, there has been a noticeable decline in the standards of education.”

The head teachers said that some teachers do not work hard as they know that there is no inspection and monitoring. The head teachers attributed poor class grades to lack of inspection and monitoring which lead to laziness among some teachers.

One member of an NGO argued that it is difficult for them to advocate effectively for the rights of people as government prohibits access to information. He said:

“Government applies the archaic Public Security Act as an excuse to prohibit access to public information”.

4.3.3 Donor pressure

Eight government officials from education, youth department and finance claimed that some of the challenges facing the implementation of policies are due to donors’ biases and interests. One of the officials said:

“Sometimes donors force government to implement reforms without due consideration of the context of Malawi such as teacher motivation.”

The officials further claimed that donors overfund some areas of need in the education sector and neglect some critical ones such as teachers’ training and motivation. The respondents also argued that the government focuses on increasing the teacher population without focusing on their

motivation (which as reported earlier is influenced by the location and schools in which they are deployed), and as a result the teachers leave to join other sectors of the economy.

4.3.4 Delayed policy reviews: Poor value from the public service

Four government officials from the ministry of education argued that there is poor time management in government. An example that was given was that some government staff can be absent from work for a week and no punitive measures could be taken. *“There is a general sense of impunity in government”*, one ministry official reported. The official further said:

“There seems to be no sense of urgency as well as ownership of government sponsored programmes”.

There is an expression which he said drives business in government, ‘*zaboma*’ which means it is for government business and not profit. It was reported that if the government were to adopt for-profit business management principles there would be improvements in the impact of government outputs. This argument was supported by almost all respondents working in government.

One male student was also concerned that the government did not seem to be held accountable for inadequacies in the educational system. He said:

“Government knows that whatever they do against the wishes of its citizens, there will be no consequences. My strong view is that one day; we shall have the replica of the Arab uprising here. They cannot keep on messing up with our education system and walk away; not with the knowledge we have about the Arab uprising”.

Acknowledging weaknesses in policy monitoring a government official argued that:

“Due to poor time management and low commitment to government business, some public policies are unnecessarily delayed for review and as such some critical policy issues remain unattended”.

4.3.5 Poor communication systems

The limited supply of policy document copies to stakeholders inhibits collaboration in implementing the policies.

All secondary and primary school teachers from both urban and rural areas stated that while policy documents are public documents only a few stakeholders have access to them. A male rural primary school teacher said:

“I have never had a copy of the education policy. I have seen it before with a government official”.

The revelation by the primary school teacher was supported by almost all secondary and primary school teachers that observed that the government does not print enough copies of the education policy for the teachers. While agreeing with the teachers’ arguments, an official from the ministry of education argued:

“Government has limited funds to print enough copies for all teachers and officials.”

The official however was of the opinion that it is not easy for teachers to motivate their pupils and students because the teachers themselves are not motivated.

4.3.6 Suggested options for resolving the underlying causes

This section presents suggestions for improving the attendance of youth in education. The suggestions focus on the following factors:

- School, college and university factors
- Family factors
- Motivation factors
- Cultural factors
- Governance factors
- Policies

4.3.6.1 School, college and university factors

Eight out of 10 government officials, and all primary and secondary school teachers cited the review of the school curriculum as a landmark strategy to motivate youth to attend education, while urban and rural secondary school teachers argued that secondary school students cited boring subjects as their main reason for absenting from classes. One government official suggested:

“The development of a new curriculum should include views from experts in the labour market sector, youth and the academia.”

The majority of youth in school from both urban and rural areas suggested that a new curriculum development should take into consideration the needs of students in rural and urban areas.

Related to new curriculum reformation, an NGO official suggested:

“Teachers should be sensitized about the value of establishing the background for subjects taught to motivate the youth in school to develop interest to attend classes.”

The NGOs also suggested that all challenges identified in research should be given special attention.

One NGO officer said:

“Let the teachers introduce their lessons in a manner that will make the students understand the value of the subjects being taught. The teachers should also help the students in choosing subjects to pursue”.

Almost all secondary school teachers, public college and university students and NGOs observed that the current curriculum neglects subjects that respond to the market. They said that youths would be attracted to stay in school when they feel that the subjects being offered open up opportunities for employment. The respondents agreed that the:

“School curriculum should be revised to accommodate the subjects that would build the capacities of the youth to exploit natural resources available in Malawi for the development of the country”.

The majority of youth in urban and rural areas who are in and out of secondary schools were in agreement with an argument advanced by one of the youths from a rural secondary school who argued:

“Since Malawi’s economy is agriculture-based, the government should support youth education and training in commercial farming as youth would then be sure of either self or organizational employment”.

One female youth in school from the urban area said:

“All countries surrounding Malawi are rich because of minerals. Our leaders should invest in mineral exploration. There is no way we can develop with this agro- economy. Our curriculums are fine but the government needs to support the creation of jobs based on the lessons we get in school.”

In summary, the respondents were of the view that as long as the curriculum does not address issues of the economy and market needs, the youth will continue to stay away from education.

Three university lecturers and two college lecturers advised that teachers should adopt an interactive pedagogical way of teaching, as the rote form of teaching leads to reduced interest in school, college and university dropouts.

Two girls from public universities suggested that government and other stakeholders such as religious establishments should invest in the construction of girl's hostels to address the challenge of costly accommodation.

There were also suggestions from parents that challenges affecting youth education attendance such as diseases should be addressed comprehensively using research findings. An urban parent said:

“There are various challenges in the education sector. Each challenge should be addressed by specific and comprehensive activities. In Malawi, there is a problem of neglecting research findings that could lead to effective activities for addressing specific problems”.

4.3.6.2 Family

All ten government officials, almost all the youth in and out of school from rural and urban areas, and 19 parents from both rural and urban areas felt that the best approach would be for parents and teachers to engage their children and students in understanding what their aspirations are and guide them in their choice of subjects. However, government officials said that parents and teachers have the duty of guiding their children and students as they may sometimes make wrong choices.

4.3.6.2.1 Poverty

All respondents except four government ministry officials argued that government should fight corruption and adopt long-term strategies of poverty alleviation. They singled out some politicians' practice of distributing cash to the youth and the general public to gain political votes. The hand-outs were linked to general expectations of some Malawians to have basic needs provided for by the government. They urged the government to pass a law that prohibits this practice. A group of rural teachers suggested:

“Government should partner with NGOs, who have expertise in managing community revolving loan programmes, so that the local population could be economically empowered.”

The urban respondents were of the view that there should be enforcement of fiscal policies that include fighting corruption, transparency and accountability on how public funds are used.

Almost all respondents suggested that government should invest in irrigation schemes. The respondents believe that irrigation farming complemented by provision of subsidised fertilizer can greatly improve crop production. The increased crop production was said to have a direct link with increased income as sales would increase and could be used to support school attendance.

Five NGOs argued that government should stick to national development plans. One NGO official proposed:

“Stopping the politicization of development programmes could lead to sustained development”.

Sticking to the national development agenda was believed to be a remedy for dealing with the problem of the use of public funds for new programmes instead of continuing with the old ones. Abuse of funds was mentioned as an underlying cause of poverty. NGOs argued that abandoning education programmes to start new ones was tantamount to abuse of funds.

The majority of respondents believed that strategies to reduce poverty should be supported by the political will to deal with corruption and to support all economic development strategies.

4.3.6.3 Motivation

Suggestions for motivating youth to attend school are cross-cutting and are covered in options for addressing the other inhibiting factors. The suggestions are directly linked to school and home inhibiting factors covered in sections 4.3.7.1 and 4.3.7.2.1.

4.3.6.4 Cultural factors: Inclusion of traditional leaders

All but two primary school teachers, all but one secondary school teacher, NGOs, urban parents and the media concurred that the custodians of culture, such as traditional leaders, should be strategically involved in the promotion of school attendance. All seven media houses argued that there is no established strategic alliance between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the traditional authorities to handle cultural issues that inhibit girls from continuing with their education beyond primary school. This argument was supported by the other respondents. One government official observed:

“Cultural issues affecting the education of girls have been well documented but there is no strategy in place to deal effectively with such issues.”

Traditional leaders advised that the government should emulate the traditional system where all social services are managed by teams and not by single powerful people such as politicians in government. One said:

“Since the youth are always curious to learn, there is a need to harness this enthusiasm. For example, when traditional counsellors have identified needs of a village such as digging irrigation channels for farming, making hoe handles for farming and thatching of huts, such skills are taught in the village.”

They claimed that the youth always come to attend such training skills because they are sure they will be hired to provide such services and therefore make a living. They further argued that the government needs to copy the relevance of traditional taught skills in their curriculum.

However, two female primary school teachers and one male secondary teacher argued that it would be a waste of resources to involve traditional leaders in promoting education attendance. One of the female secondary school teachers said:

“I had bad experiences working with traditional leaders in an attempt to sensitise them about the need not to delay the graduation of boys from initiation as they miss classes. All they said was that spirits could not allow for that modification”.

4.3.6.5 Governance factors

Two issues are discussed in this section: corruption and decentralisation

4.3.6.5.1 Corruption

One official from the office of the president and cabinet argued that:

“Unless the Anti-Corruption Bureau is independent from the executive arm of government, corruption cannot be reduced. There are no members of the ruling party or their affiliates that get prosecuted on corruption charges.”

Almost all the respondents had similar views that the government is the main prohibiting agency to reducing corruption. A secondary school female teacher argued that:

“Issues of corruption could only be dealt with effectively if the president and his henchmen were not part of the culprits. The Anti-Corruption Bureau should be free from the president and his supporters”.

4.3.6.5.2 Decentralisation

There were conflicting opinions about support for decentralisation between government officials, rural parents, private school owners and some traditional leaders. Government officials were of the view that support for decentralisation structures would enhance the

development of the education sector. The officials cited delay of primary school teachers' salaries and budget allocation as examples. However, rural parents, private school owners and some traditional leaders had a different view as one of them argued:

“Education sector funds should be managed at the central level as they have experienced that local officers divert public funds meant for the education sector”.

4.3.6.6 Policy

Government officials at the local level, college and university lecturers, literate parents, the media, NGOs and youth in universities cited policy relevance and implementation as the main overarching possible solution to the challenges facing the education sector.

4.3.6.6.1 Policy relevance and implementation

Government officials, NGOs, private school owners and the media representatives agreed that a more relevant education policy should be formulated. The suggestions emphasised that the government should take into consideration recommendations made in various education research studies that have identified the problems facing the education sector. A media company argued:

“Mapping of the stakeholders to take part in the management of the education sector needs to be reviewed as the current teams are not effective. Policies are difficult to implement because politicians who are not technocrats manage technical disciplines such as youth development”.

The university lecturers urged that the government should not be bulldozed by donors to implement policies that are not coherent with Malawi's needs.

4.3.6.6.2 Policy review

Primary and secondary school teachers suggested that policies governing their payroll system should be revised. They suggested that salaries should be managed by an independent organization

to ensure that there is efficiency in the system. They felt that politicians are undermining the payroll management systems. A male rural secondary school teacher argued:

“Issues surrounding policy should be left to technocrats as politicians have proven to be less effective as most of them do not have skills in the areas that the policies attempt to address.”

The youth were also of the view that the government should establish reasons why many youth are not attending education, instead of rushing into accommodating them in income-generating activities which come without proper training.

A private university lecturer proposed:

“Government should use education to deal with challenges which the youth policy is failing to address such as unemployment and urbanization.”

The lecturer further said that the challenges that the youth policy is attempting to address are in fact a reflection of the failure of the education sector to address them.

There were also suggestions by some public university youth that the definition of youth should only include those who are of schooling age.

There were also calls for the NYP and Education Policy to be made available to the general public so that they can be informed about the agenda of government on education and youth development. Then the public would know what role to play to achieve the objectives set by the government.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided in-depth insights about education and training challenges as perceived by various groups of people and individuals. Issues relating to school, family, motivation, culture and governance have been addressed by both government and non-government officials thereby enriching data for this study. There are some issues which are dominant among the rural areas such as long distances to schools, female oppression to attend education and poor schools while urban areas seem to have less educational challenges.

The next chapter analyses data from literature and views of respondents.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses the study findings which are contextualised within the literature. The discussion takes into account the following:

- Arguments advanced in human capital theory and other supporting theories
- Malawi education and youth policy direction and implementation
- Respondents perceptions of factors affecting youth education attendance
- Government policy rhetoric concerning low youth education attendance
- Background of the education system in Malawi.

Based on literature discussed in chapter 1 and 2, it has been observed that the Malawi education policy and some education literature assume a generic presentation of problems instead of discussing critical issues giving rise to the perceived problems. For example, the education policy rhetoric presents ‘inadequate teachers’ as one of the main problems affecting education attendance. Contrary to this generic view of education problems, this study has revealed detailed and complex issues which give rise to such problems presented in the policy. For example, in this study, ‘inadequate teachers’ has emerged as a symptom of the following issues: long distances to schools in rural areas, poor salaries and poor housing. Instead of focusing on increasing the number of teachers as a response to the problem of ‘inadequate teachers’, the proposed strategy in this study has focused on the detailed and complex underlying causes for low youth education attendance. This study has adopted a critical approach to bring on board emerging underlying causes which appear complex and difficult to address. Some of the complex issues could be culturally and politically sensitive but are exposed so that the proposed education strategy is well informed with regard to the causes and the environment/situations that favour/nurture lack of youth education attendance. A critical approach also enables Malawi policy maker rhetoric to be challenged. This is salient because even though some respondents echoed similar policy rhetoric, the findings indicate that government rhetoric appears to assume essentialism when analysing problematic issues surrounding the education sector.

As mentioned in section 2.4.1, the underlying causes affecting youth education attendance lead to action points to confront the problem. Action points derived from this study are discussed below and further in chapter 6. The action plans for addressing the problem of low education attendance are based on in-depth investigation. It is assumed in this study that the inclusion of the complex issues in the proposed action plans of the policy adds value to the objective of increasing education attendance. The motivation to address underlying causes is based on two factors: The first being that there is evidence in the literature that suggests that strategies to address problems outlined in the education policy have failed as the problems still appear in the subsequent education policies. The second is that the predisposing factors identified in this study have either been partially addressed or missed. An example is the problem of female school dropout where the education policy ignores cultural implications that affect girls and yet there is evidence in literature and respondents' views that culture is one of the main causes for the low female education attendance and school/university dropout problems.

The emerging complex underlying causes of low youth education attendance discussed in this chapter are part of this study's contribution to knowledge. This chapter also attempts to fill the education policy strategy gaps identified in EMIS (2013), NEP (2016) and MIE (2014–19) in chapter 2. Furthermore, the discussion also addresses gaps identified in chapter 1 section 1.6 which discusses the justification of the study.

In order to conduct a systematic discussion of the study findings, figure 5.1 highlights an analytical framework to guide the discussion concerning school, family, motivation, culture and governance factors. Figure 5.1, which is informed by chapters 2 and 4, also presents underlying factors influencing low education attendance and their sources. It has been necessary also to indicate the interrelationships that exist among underlying causes as their interconnectivity has helped in the design of the proposed education strategies as shown in log frames in chapter 6.

Table 5.1a: Highlighting underlying causes for poor education attendance and their sources

	Literature	Government policies	This study
School, college and university factors	Pedagogy, irrelevant education curriculum, limited spaces, poor management of schools, limited use of research data by government to inform youth education policy, poor teacher training	Pedagogy, irrelevant education curriculum, limited spaces	Politics, academic boycotts, quota system of selecting public university students, HIV/AIDS, absence of psychosocial support services, large class sizes (over population), free primary education, negative attitude of some public college and university lecturers towards female students, limited number of nursery schools in rural areas, policy rhetoric.
Family factors	Poverty, illiteracy, family size and cultural practices	Poverty, illiteracy	Labour and market exploitation, video shows, HIV/AIDS, over population, domestic chores, limited rural models, traditional leaders' unclear roles in promoting education attendance, limited youth counselling sessions.

Motivation factors	Illiterate parents, over populated classes, long distances to school, inadequate teachers, culture, lack of role models, low salaries, and poor teacher training.	Illiteracy, poverty	Domestic chores, child labour, limited rural models, village entertainment programmes, teacher frustration, irrelevant curriculum, limited rural nursery schools, limited counselling services in schools, drug and alcohol abuse
Cultural factors	Traditional beliefs and practices, globalization (Western cultures)	Traditional beliefs and practices	Exclusion of traditional leaders by government, globalisation, limited support for the decentralisation system.
Governance factors	Decentralisation, corruption, politics, policy implementation, post-colonial development strategies	Economic problems, policy implementation challenges	Political rhetoric, weak policy enforcement mechanism, creation of an elite society, poor civic consultation on the part of government, failure to synchronise public policies, weak transparency and accountability systems, limited support for decentralisation systems.

Some issues listed in the column “This study” in Table 5.1a have been mentioned in the literature review and government policies sources but the subsequent action plans and steps to address them in the education policy (NEP, 2016) appear weak hence the inclusion under the column “this study”.

While this study centres on the underlying causes for the low youth education attendance, there are some drivers that have influenced youth education attendance as shown in table 5.1b. However, the existence of the underlying causes has significantly undermined the impact of the enablers.

Table 5.1b shows some of the enabling factors for the attendance of education.

Table 5.1b: Enablers for education attendance

ENABLERS	STRATEGICPOLICYOBJECTIVE
Free primary education (ESIP, 2009–13)	Equity and access
Policy for increased female university selection as discussed in section 2.3.1 and Musisi (2003)	Equity and access, women’s empowerment
Boarding facilities (ESIP, 2009–13)	Equity and access, women’s empowerment
Construction of new schools and colleges (ESIP, 2009–13)	Equity and access, quality and relevance
Emergence of private schools (ESIP, 2009–13)	Equity and access
Mitigation action steps to reduce the impact of prohibitive factors as shown in table 5.1c	Equity and access, quality and relevance, governance and management, women’s empowerment

Based on table 5.1b, it is evident that government attempts to address the main education policy objectives: equity and access, quality and relevance, and management and governance. The incorporation of missing issues in policy would enhance the chances of achieving

better results in education policy. This study as argued before provides the missing elements.

Table 5.1c attempts to show evidence that schools have adopted mitigation action steps outside the education policy in an attempt to improve youth education attendance. It is argued that these outside policy initiatives by schools could be proof that the education policy has gaps that give rise to some of the education sector challenges. Moreover, they only apply to primary schools.

5.1c: Existing mitigation actions steps for school attendance challenges

EDUCATION ATTENDANCE CHALLENGES	MITIGATION ACTION STEPS
Shortage of classes and large class sizes	Use of morning and afternoon shifts Students exchanging notebooks for marking Learning in the open space as shown in figure 5.2 Turning buildings meant for toilets into classrooms as shown in appendix A6.
Shortage of books	Group learning as discussed in section 5.1.1.5 and problems revealed in appendix A7
Teacher illnesses (HIV/AIDS)	Classes are shared among teachers.

5.1 Factors affecting education attendance

Some of the issues identified in chapter 4 as affecting education attendance have been merged in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions as the underlying causes are closely related, as shown in Appendix M and figure 5.1.

One of the features of chapter 5 is that it discusses underlying causes which Hudson and Akyeampong (2016) term silent factors responsible for the exclusion of some students from education while EMIS (2013) calls them unknown factors. Apparently, the silent or unknown factors are responsible for the education and youth policy gaps which this study has attempted to fill. The term policy rhetoric which appears to be a feature of public policies is also used in this chapter in order to link the underlying causes to the policy rhetoric.

Figure 5.1 below shows the complexity and interrelationships that exist among the underlying factors. The figure also shows the complexity of the underlying causes; this means that it is not possible to identify only one isolated underlying cause as affecting youth educational attendance.

The figure is a visual representation of the interrelationships of the factors represented as opposed to numerical representation as would have been the case in a statistical study where the weight and length of the arrows would have been subjected to interpretation. The arrows represent the direction of the relationship; in the case of this figure the arrows point to both factors of the connector (arrow). The figure also illuminates the most important factors which link most of the underlying factors thereby facilitating the identification of the overarching factors requiring priority attention in a proposed education strategy.

Figure 5.1

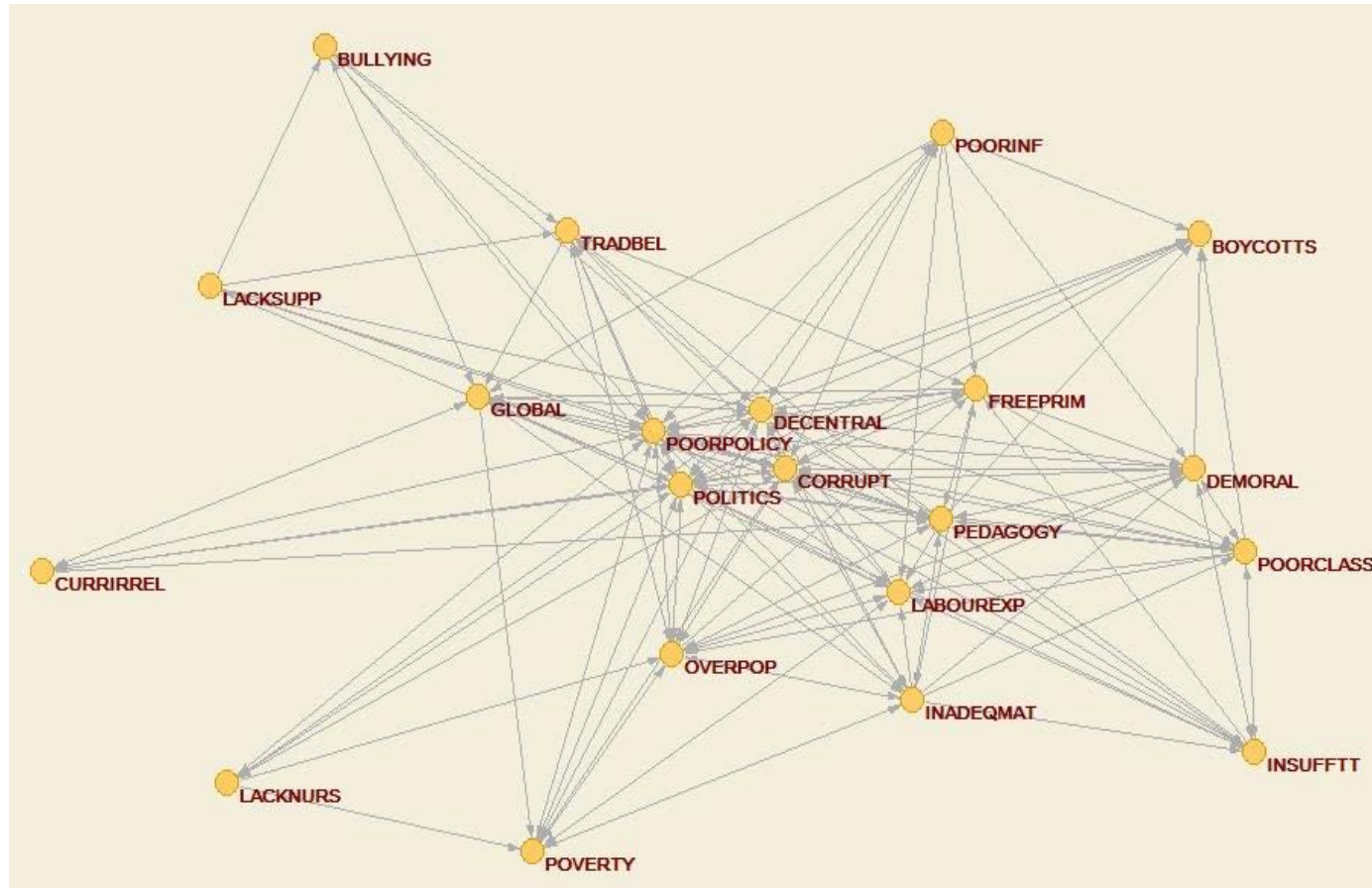


Figure 5.1: The intersections emerging from the interrelationship between and among underlying causes

Key for terms used in the figure

Freeprim	=Free Primary Education
Poorinf	=Poor infrastructure
Poorclass	=Poor Class Management
Insufft t	=Insufficient Teacher Training
Demoral	=Demoralisation (Motivation) Teacher
Pedagogy	=Pedagogy
Inadeqmat	=Inadequate Materials
Bullying	=Bullying
Curirrel	=Curriculum Irrelevance
Boycotts	=Academic Boycotts
Poverty	=Poverty
Labouexp	=Trade and Labour Exploitation
Overpop	=Overpopulation
Lacksupp	=Lack of Support Services
Lacknurs	=Lack of Nursery Schools
Tradbel	=Traditional beliefs (culture) and Practices
Global	=Globalisation
Politics	=Politics (policy direction and implementation)
Corrupt	=Corruption (weak internal controls leading to abuse of public funds)
Decentral	=Decentralisation (resistance to empower local structures)
Poorpolicy	=Poor Policy Implementation

5.1.1 School, college and university factors

This section discusses primary school, college and university data as presented in chapter 4, section 4.1.1 and in chapter 2.

- Free Primary Education (FPE) and resulting pressure on secondary, college and university education
- Poor school, college and university infrastructure (learning and accommodation)
- Poor class management
- Pedagogy: teachers'/lecturers' attitudes and other related issues
- Poor teacher training
- Frustrated teachers and poor education investments
- Inadequate learning and teaching materials
- Bullying
- Curriculum irrelevance
- Academic boycotts in schools and universities

5.1.1.1 Free primary education (FPE) and resulting pressure on secondary, college and university education

While FPE has increased pupil enrolment in primary schools (NESP, 2008-17, EMIS 2013 and Banda 2003), arguments by respondents such as those advanced by a rural primary school teacher: *“before the abolition of primary school fees, the quality of education in Malawi was one of the best in Africa. Teachers knew their pupils by name and were aware of their individual academic challenges. Now, it is almost impossible”*, serves to inform the education policy about the poor quality of primary education as being a negative effect of FPE. Poor quality in primary schools poses the risk of compromising the quality of knowledge and skills that pupils get in primary schools. This could mean that the foundation for building knowledge and skills among youth as argued in human capital theory is compromised. Based on human capital theory (Olaniyan and Okemakinde 2008), there is need for government to invest in the education sector to make up for the revenue lost due to the introduction of FPE. Moreover, an argument in NESP (2008-17) that resources to support quality education are too inadequate to match the objectives of the education policy which could be an indication that FPE implementation falls short of satisfying the human capital theory. Based on views of respondents in chapter 4, section 4.1.1.1,

it would appear that FPE is a good concept except that government has not been able to provide the education sector the support needed such as improving the welfare of teachers so that they do not resign to do other professional jobs.

It is argued in this study that FPE is a good policy and relevant to Malawi's rural education needs, however, as has been the common feature of the education and youth policy, its implementation has raised questions about its relevance in promoting youth education attendance. As a matter of policy evaluation, the revelation by NEP (2014) that Malawi registers about 144% female pupils in primary school better than other sub-Saharan African countries, but the completion rate is 62% of youth that includes girls could be described as catastrophic. It would be helpful if the government focused on issues surrounding the implementation of FPE so that its objectives of providing high quality education to all is achieved.

The lack of resources to support FPE could also be attributed to corruption in government and increasing population size as discussed in sections 2.1.5, 4.1.5.2 and 4.1.2.1.2. Critical factors like teacher–pupil ratios, provision of learning materials and training of teachers to manage the influx of students appear to have been grossly underestimated by previous governments when planning FPE.

Although the increase in enrolment is arguably a positive achievement, it has resulted in poor quality of education experience (for example, a high pupil–teacher ratio) which undermines the policy objective of quality and relevance as stipulated in NESP (2008–17). It is argued that poor quality primary education has a direct effect on post primary education as graduating students from primary education may be ill prepared to take up secondary and university education. Nnandi (2014) suggests that human capital theory has a strong link with education, arguing that education prepares citizens to be able to acquire skills needed for personal and national development. If students cannot progress to secondary education how can they develop the skills required?

The term “Free Primary Education” could also be wrongly named as respondents in section 4.1.2.1.1 argued that the demand to pay for learning materials and school funds raises the question about the meaning of the term.

Based on arguments in chapter 4, the reasons for low education attendance are far more complex than discussed in education policies and strategies reviewed. It is argued in this study that even if the government had sufficient resources to support FPE, there are other complex issues that have to be dealt with. For example, poor decentralisation of the management of the education sector as argued in section 2.1.4, corruption as argued in section 2.15 and poor education policy implementation as stated in section 2.2.1 are equally critical for the success of FPE. It is difficult to argue that the post-colonial education trajectory of Malawians is in line with the human capital theory as it appears not sufficient enough to empower citizens with knowledge and skills for personal and national development.

According to Dickovic (2013), Malawi is a victim of donor influences which has seen Malawi making rushed decisions to accept foreign concepts such as FPE without critically considering the context of the country. The apparent results are poor implementation of the FPE. While FPE addresses the problem of low enrolment in primary education, it creates more challenges in post FPE levels which raises questions regarding its cost–effect benefits. According to Ngwira (2014) and ESIP (2009–13), Malawi registers low student enrolments in secondary schools as most of the primary school graduates cannot find space in secondary schools. ESIP (2009–13), EMIS (2013) and NEP (2016) observe that while resources are directed to primary education, secondary and tertiary education is struggling to cope with the number of youth qualified to enrol. This means that some youth fail to continue with secondary education and many never enter tertiary education due to lack of space as primary education seems to be prioritised. Undermining secondary and tertiary education is a serious development issue as secondary education is considered as gateway to higher paying jobs in the formal sector (MoEST, and UNESCO, 2004). Although formal education is not the only means for achieving human capital, education plays a critical role in creating a class of citizens that possess skills to implement policies as Fitzsimons (1999), Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) and Wasswa-Kintu (1995) argue.

FPE may probably not be for a developing country like Malawi that cannot sustain quality of education without school fees. Malawi needs to consider the example of Botswana where they introduced fees for primary education, as argued by Oumer (2009). The introduction of FPE at the behest of Western aid donors arguably raises doubts on the independence of Malawi to

implement its own needs based education system. The apparent frustration by a female pupil from a primary school bears evidence: *“We are so congested in our classroom that our teachers rarely mark our assignments. We exchange notebooks for marking. I will drop out when I get to Standard 8 (13 years) as I see no future in education”*. Based on the consequences of FPE such as the views of the 13 year-old girl, it is argued that some of the negative effects of FPE is school drop-out leading to young people not attending education. The problem of insufficient classrooms to match the influx of pupils in primary schools could be addressed if government used durable tents which the same government has used to shelter Mozambique refugees as argued by an embassy official in chapter 4, section 4.1.6.3. These types of tents are also used by the government as banquet halls. This means that if only the government was innovative, these types of tents could be used to help reduce the problem of the shortage of classrooms in Malawi.

The comment by the 13 year-old girl cited above provides an opportunity for more detailed analysis of the negative effects of FPE and what needs to be addressed. While her frustration makes sense, exchanging note books among pupils for marking appears to be a reasonable alternative solution to having pupil assignments marked. It is argued in this study that this alternative could be an attempt to address the problem of insufficient teachers to mark class work. However, there is need for teachers to identify pupils who struggle to do well in class so that they may get special assistance. Based on literature, it is possible that this 13 year-old girl would be married at this early age thereby undermining efforts by government to empower women especially those from rural areas where culture plays a significant role in their failure to attend education. The focus on FPE at the expense of post-primary education strongly appears to enhance the cultural expectation for girls not to be educated because secondary education provision is limited. Insufficient educational provision would also seem to undermine the benefits of FPE. For example, FPE offers girls an emancipatory or transformatory form of education as Canadian scholars Howe and Covell (2010) discuss. Emancipatory or transformatory education would increase girls’ chances (especially in rural communities) of moving from a subsistence and oppressive form of life to one of their choice. It could be argued that educating girls would be a potential strategy for reaching out to more girls who would normally be not aware of the benefits of attending education as the educated girls would act as role models. It cannot be disputed that FPE has provided an opportunity for some rural girls whose families cannot afford to pay primary school fees to attain some literacy. However, as

argued by MoEST and UNESCO (2004:12) that the fundamental objective of primary education was to instil basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to over 95% of the school age population by 2012, it is argued that primary education is not sufficient to prepare girls to be role models. Moreover, in some cultures girls would not go beyond primary education as suggested in chapter 2. According to ESIP (2009-13) and the current National Education Policy (2016) this objective has not been successful. Kadzamira and Rose (2003) also argue that the primary reasons for FPE were to increase access, eliminate inequalities between groups and sensitise communities on the importance of education which according to the current National Education Policy (2016) has not been achieved. However, FPE without extended support for post-primary education is not a solution to the creation of human capital for Malawi. This study also argues that sensitisation of communities on the importance of education as argued by Kadzamira and Rose (2003) and respondents is essential.

FPE also presents the challenge of teaching methods as argued by an urban primary school teacher and a government official: *“It is not possible to use interactive methods of teaching in overpopulated classes, it’s often chaotic. Teaching has turned into preaching. Teachers in public primary schools are overworked and rote teaching is the only alternative option to teach the pupils. There is no structured individual help”*. While it is true that FPE has led to class congestion as pupils whose parents would not be able to afford primary school fees are able to enrol, it would seem unfair to blame the class congestion on FPE entirely as increasing population as suggested in chapter 4 is also a contributing factor. The suggestion by respondents that the solution to the problem is to build more schools makes sense, but ignores other critical factors such as teacher motivation which according to the literature and respondents’ views is influenced by a lack of income, poor teacher development and training, lack of resources and long distances to schools. What appears to be lacking in government policies is how to identify and deal with multiple complexities associated with challenges in the education sector.

FPE could have strategic development value if girls in public secondary schools, especially those from rural areas, were allowed to continue on free education or the government significantly subsidised their fees. In order to educate the next generation as argued by Hudson and Akyeampong (2016), it is important that Malawi pays special attention to supporting education

in rural areas. This approach would have likely made a significant rise in the rural female education population. It is the argument of this study that as long as the government does not invest in education, it will continue spending huge sums of money on the poor such as on health services. Rural girls' fees could be subsidised as is the case with fertilizer for poor farmers as argued in section 4.1.2.1.1. Based on the corruption experiences in fertiliser distribution, strategies proposed in chapter 6 to deal with corruption would be helpful to ensure that the money for fee subsidy supports the needy youth. It is also important to note that while offering bursaries to increase the educational participation of girls is considered essential, based on the economic status of Malawi as discussed in chapter 1, Malawi may not be able to provide bursaries to all rural girls. Therefore, a needs assessment that identifies the neediest girls could be helpful. It would be helpful to support pupils/students based on parental income with the poorest families being given priority. It would also be helpful to consider school contributions towards the bursary fund.

This study argues that education not only serves to enable girls and youth in general to participate in development but also to make better informed choices in their lives than the uneducated as discussed in section 2.1.3.1 and as argued by Kronenberg (2015). It is also argued that the tendency to address symptoms of education policy problems such as school drop-out instead of the underlying causes appears to have contributed to failure to address the education sector problems sufficiently. Based on the arguments advanced in human capital theory and views of respondents, this study argues that FPE without necessary investment support may undermine its very objective of providing access to education. It is further argued that the inadequacy of teacher preparation in light of the implementation of free primary education as evidenced by the recruitment of the 18,000 teachers without being interviewed has compromised teacher quality. The allocation of such poorly prepared teachers raises questions as regards their ability to empower the youth with skills and knowledge they need to be able to choose what employment or life they desire to have. It is against this argument that this study strongly recommends the support for the effective implementation of FPE that its objectives are achieved.

5.1.1.2 Poor school, college and university infrastructure (learning and accommodation)

Both literature such as (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003; EMIS, 2003) and views of respondents agree that poor infrastructure in Malawi's learning institutions negatively affects both students and teachers. Although Kadzamira and Rose appear to attribute this problem largely to the introduction of FPE, politics has emerged as another contributory factor as argued by a government official: *"Politics is a major cause of poor infrastructures in learning institutions because every new government changes national development plans and politicians have a tendency of corrupting contractors thereby compromising the quality of learning infrastructures"*. Apart from compromising the quality of infrastructures, unethical political involvement in education as revealed has the risk of discouraging potential private investors in education. Another difficulty with addressing political issues is that some powerful politicians resist dialogue with less powerful people on national issues as argued in section 4.1.1.9: *"politicians in Malawi tend to be difficult to engage in dialogue with the poor on matters of public interest as their wealth gives them power"*. Arguably, the relationship between Malawi politicians and ordinary citizens can be likened to that of "superiors" versus "inferiors". Although the politicians and the Malawi population have the same culture and practices, economic status separates them. This superiority/inferiority attitude on the part of politicians can also be likened to McCarthy's (1998) conception of "Orientalism" whereby European Orientalists looked down upon Arab and Asian culture and traditions as inferior to Western culture (discussed in Wandela 2014). Dialogue between government officials and the ordinary citizens would provide an opportunity to reduce some of the education sector challenges such as the poor educational infrastructures. The argument here is that the present government officials appear to demonstrate the colonial master traits of dictating the type of educational development considered necessary for its citizens. Just as it was in the colonial era, the present government appears to fail to respond to the real needs of the people as they seem not engaged constructively. Unless, the government officials support the education sector so that the so called "inferior" groups could be empowered to increase their chances of employability. The colonial education management style which is not conducive for the empowerment of citizens still appears to exist. It is argued that this education sector management style is not coherent with the way citizens could be empowered as argued in human capital theory and supported by Prud'homme (2010).

As argued by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001) that education can be a source of exclusion if some members of society are deprived of the right to education, the complaint by a female primary school pupil about class conditions: “*Some of us do not attend school during cold weather as floors are too cold for comfort*” should be a concern to government. Cold floors and learning in open dusty spaces can result in children getting ill from colds and chest infections and thereby dropping out of school or failing examinations. Since this argument is advanced by a female primary school pupil, it could mean that females who are already burdened with many other challenges to attend education are further being subjected to adverse learning conditions. If this challenge is not checked the risk of more young girls dropping out of school is high. Conducive learning conditions are necessary for the youth to be motivated to attend classes and thereby acquire knowledge and skills for their empowerment to relate well to the world in which they live. However, it seems that the learning conditions in some schools are not supportive of the process of empowering the youth with knowledge and skills as they may not attend classes. As argued by Hild et al. (2007) the achievement of human capital theory is dependent on other factors such as social background which arguably correlates with the health of an individual. It is therefore argued that ill health is not in conformity with the achievement of human capital theory.

In some rural areas, a solution by the government to children learning in overcrowded classrooms is learning under trees, however, this has health problems as discussed in this section. The implications of sitting on dusty floors are similar to cold floors as dust could also cause illnesses.



Figure 5.2: Children learning under a tree (source: Global Health Hub’ 2013:1)

Learning under trees carries the risk of injuries or deaths in an event that the trees have collapsed while classes are in session. If such an incident happens, it could potentially contribute to some parents discouraging their children from attending classes.

Although there is no evidence in the literature that Malawi has a social exclusion policy, there is evidence in practice that some groups of youth are socially excluded from attending education and thereby deprived from participation in national development. An example is the revelation by a rural primary school boy who argued that: *“It is not true that there are facilities for the disabled in our schools. Many disabled young people are in their homes as the infrastructure is not conducive for their learning.”* Government rhetoric that is not matched with action is also exposed by this revelation as the education policy – NESP (2008–17) – stipulates that all education institutions should have infrastructure that favours learning for all groups of people. The exclusion of the disabled in spite of the availability of policy to support them also contradicts the government’s commitment to the Dakar Declaration on Education For All by 2015 as stipulated in the ESIP (2009–13). The exclusion of disabled children and youth from education worsens their vulnerability as they would struggle to earn income due to having poor education. This means that disabled individuals are subjected to poverty which could be prevented or reduced by investing in their education as argued by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) in discussing human capital theory. It is worrying to note that the strategic action plan of the education policy (ESIP, 2009–13:51-67) does not seem to know the actual needs of the various forms of physical challenges of pupils and students. The action plan is too general and superficial to be of any use in addressing this challenge. See Appendix A11 that illustrates the exclusion of disabled children in school. It is argued in this study that policy direction should be informed by actual needs of the youth and not simply satisfying policy rhetoric. Arguably, the education policy rhetoric appears unhelpful in empowering the youth to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to confront challenges of life as advanced in human capital theory.

Based on the NESP (2008-17) that argues that lack of space for learning, human, financial and material resources to support quality education undermines human capital creation, the argument by a third-year female university student is a typical example: *“There are some girls who fail to pay for their accommodation and end up cohabiting with boys in private homes. Some of these*

girls have ended up being pregnant while some get HIV". The revelation that female students that fail to get accommodation on campus end up cohabiting with boys indicates that the desire by females to access education has become a trap for their empowerment. As argued by the female students, cohabitation with boys exposes them to sexual abuses, pregnancies and being infected with HIV/AIDS. This study argues that the existing education system which has excluded girls beyond primary schooling, and the cultural expectations which are not expecting girls to participate in college and university education could be the influencing factors for less consideration being given to female accommodation in universities. Although the government is attempting to address this problem (LUANAR, 2015 and UNIMA, 2015), progress in this area is potentially being challenged by issues of corruption and politics as argued in chapter 4. The revelation in chapter 4 that it is mostly the poor girls that end up cohabiting with boys in their quest to get support for their educational studies could be seen as a violation of the rights of girls to attain their full potential in education. This study argues that the cost of accommodation, as well as the lack of availability, negatively impacts on girls from poor families. The girls are not cohabiting for the sake of it but because they lack support. Cohabiting with boys is a consequence of universities being overpopulated with boys. The problem however is largely faced by girls from rural areas owing to the location of the universities in urban areas – presumably girls studying in college and university in urban areas have homes close by which means they can go home and attend university classes daily.

The dropping out of poor girls from college and university education is particularly impactful on rural areas as the girls also face other serious challenges for them to get educated, as presented in chapters 2 and 4. Based on the outcome of this study, the dropping out of rural girls from university has the potential risk of undermining efforts to motivate rural youth especially girls to attend education from primary to university levels. Female university graduates especially from rural areas would be potential effective motivators for their counterparts in the rural areas to acquire knowledge and skills for their own and national development as argued in human capital theory. It would be helpful for girls in schools, colleges and universities to be supported by the formation of a complaint and response committee that would take the responsibility of receiving complaints of abuses and also holding the perpetrators accountable. The committee could act as a deterrent to the potential offenders.

Based on the discussion in this section, it is argued that for the fulfilment of the human capital theory other issues such as corruption, women's empowerment, motivation and decentralization need to be addressed in order to ensure that Malawi has conducive learning institutions to facilitate youth participation in education and empowerment.

5.1.1.3 Poor class management (large class sizes)

While governments' blame (NESP, 2008-17) of poor class management on the increase of pupils attending primary education appears logical, arguments emerging from respondents appear to focus on issues that are ignored by government and have the potential of contributing significantly to the problem. For example, a retired male primary school teacher argued that: *"In some cases one teacher would have to teach 200 pupils. Large classes such as these would end up being handled by less qualified teachers with no learning and teaching materials or teaching techniques. This has serious consequences on the standards of teaching and learning as class management becomes an issue"*. This study argues that assigning very large classes to one teacher has the risk of excluding students that require special attention as well as those with middle and higher abilities. As a result, such students may fail examinations and eventually drop out of schools. It is also argued that even with a well-trained teacher, due to pressure to deliver the curriculum whilst managing several students, it may not always be possible for the teacher to present high epistemic quality to avoid excluding some of the students as argued by Hudson (2015). It is also possible that poor class management may be aggravated by poor teacher training. Moreover, a private school owner argued: *"Teacher training methodologies are not responding to the prevailing classroom environment today"*. Less qualified teachers in primary schools could find it challenging to manage large classes as suggested in section 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.6. As argued in human capital theory, there is a need for the government to invest in the training of teachers so that quality of education is not compromised.

While it is evident that class congestion has been worsened by the introduction of FPE, government should focus on broader and specific issues surrounding this problem. For example, there is no evidence found in this study that shows that the recommended teacher student ratio of 1:60 for primary schools and 1:40 for secondary schools was achieved by 2015 as planned by the government (NESP, 2008–17). The cause of this failure could be the lack of addressing the

longstanding issues contributing to the frustration of teachers, which leads to some trained teachers not staying in the profession, and the government struggling to have sufficient teachers in schools. Based on respondents' views, it is also argued that poorly motivated teachers may not always arrive to teach their classes thereby creating a shortage of teachers in schools which further present the scenario of too few teachers for available classes especially in rural areas:

“Some teachers especially in the rural areas fail to attend classes due to various challenges such as walking long distances to schools, poor housing and low income.

Unless the government improves the welfare of teachers especially in the rural areas, the education standards in the rural areas will remain poor thereby further contributing to the exclusion of the poor from educational empowerment.

The apparent deprivation of rural areas of essential services such as education as argued by UNESCO (2008) and NEP (2016) threatens to further alienate the people from being empowered through education and also raises questions about the relevance of education sector decentralization. According to decentralization theory in the case of Zimbabwe, Mupindu (2012) argues that Zimbabwe's education success story is attributed to the active participation of local school development committees and associations. Based on NEP (2016), about seven years after Prud'homme (2010) argued that decentralisation is a policy concern in Malawi as the central government is resisting devolving power to local district assemblies, things seem not to have changed. However, the assertions by Mulkeen (2005), EMIS (2013) and NESP (2008-17) which indicate that the problem of low teacher–pupil ratio which contribute to poor class management is the problem of the rural areas is not entirely true. This study has established that urban areas also experience similar problems although at a smaller scale as compared to the rural areas. It is important that this problem is also addressed in the urban areas so that it is checked before it escalates. It would seem that the management of the education sector in Malawi does not give confidence that quality education can be guaranteed as central government appears to fail to manage schools effectively. Furthermore, the Malawi education policies seem to be more theoretical than practical (MIE, 2014–19). It is argued therefore that failing to implement education policies which appear to be informed by the human capital theory is also failing to implement the theory. Miguel and Kremer (2004) and Hild et al. (2007) suggest that human capital theory

stipulates that knowledge and skills training are critical in empowering people to make informed choices.

5.1.1.4 Pedagogy: teachers' low motivation and lecturers' attitudes

While agreeing with the Malawi education policy and education literature studies on the challenges surrounding pedagogy such as pupil/teacher ratios, this study has established that pedagogical issues are caused by multifaceted factors among which policy direction, culture, decentralisation and teacher training are significant. As argued by Hild et al. (2007) the achievement of human capital is dependent on other factors such as culture; this study has attempted to understand how these other factors play out in the Malawi context. Issues about culture in Malawi are critical in the education attendance of girls (Kanyongolo and Malunga, 2011, Government of Malawi, 2013, ESIP, 2009–13 and EMIS, 2013). Based on the NESP (2008–17), it appears that Malawi neglects the implications of culture on pedagogy in its policies, and this was reflected in the experiences of university respondents. For example, a male university student said that: *“Some lecturers intimidate us with expulsions. Some girls are pressured to have sex with them in order to get good grades. We call these grades ‘sexually transmitted grades’. Those who refuse are sometimes expelled as they fail examinations”*. It is argued that in such circumstances, students, but especially girls, and the lecturers may not be fully comfortable to interact in class. The problem of intimidation and sexual advances posed by lecturers in universities is not discussed in the existing education policy and yet it has emerged as a serious factor that is causing some female students to drop out of university. The argument advanced by the male university student cited above which supports the complaints of female students’ needs serious attention. Forcing female students into sexual acts is a violation of their human rights and has the potential of discouraging females from attending education. As argued in earlier chapters, any act that undermines the attempts of females to acquire education aggravates their already existing cultural challenges. It is possible that the attitude of the university lecturers is informed by Malawi’s culture that allows males to demand submission from females, but this is unacceptable. Further issues surrounding female education and cultural challenges are discussed later in the chapter under culture on traditional beliefs and practice.

Sexual abuses in public universities have the risk of limiting support for coaching students who may be experiencing difficulty understanding academic concepts in class as they would not want

to create space for the lecturers to make their sexual advances. It is argued therefore that unless the Malawi education policy direction deliberately protects female students from sexual abuses in education institutions, learning will be a challenge for female students. This study suggests that the behaviour of some lecturers has the potential of increasing the number of girls who drop out of education, and who as a consequence would fall into the trap of Malawian culture that expects them to be married early. It is further argued that instead of motivating girls to remain in education, some lecturers who should have been effective change agents in dealing with the effects of culture on the education of rural girls are also playing a role in oppressing girls. Based on the behaviour of the lecturers as reported by students in this study, it could be argued that in some universities culture may supersede the influence of education on morality.

Another pedagogical challenge is the poor interaction between students and their teachers' due to large class sizes as discussed in section 4.1.1.3 and section 4.1.1.4 and as argued by an urban primary school headmistress: *"Teaching in primary schools is no longer enjoyable. It is a headache as you have to deal with too many children who present too many problems for one teacher to deal with"*. Banda (2003) and Nudelman (2011) argue that lack of interaction between teachers and their students is a direct factor influencing the acquiring of knowledge and skills as advanced in human capital theory. According to Banda (2003:3), the pedagogical method of rote teaching and lack of teacher student interaction in some schools of Malawi is caused by the poor quality of teacher training. While this could be true, revelations in chapter 4, section 4.1.1 of this study has established that rote teaching is utilized as a strategy to manage large classes.

It is the argument of this study that the youth need emancipatory education which fosters students' involvement, development of thinking and creative skills as argued by Freire (1972, 2000). Based on the education policy direction and its practice, it is further argued that the current teaching methodologies cannot help empower the population to challenge the status quo. Notwithstanding, the apparent preference for non-interactive teaching cannot be blamed entirely on congestion of pupils in class as previous education systems (as discussed in chapter 2) also favoured the non-interactive approach of teaching. This study argues that non-interactive teaching is also an indication of failure by the education sector to graduate from the colonial approach of teaching which also avoided encouraging critical minds (see chapter 2 and section 5.1.1.8).

5.1.1.5 Poor teacher recruitment, training and retention: quality education.

Based on UNESCO (2005) and issues emerging from chapter 2 and 4, it is argued in this study that issues surrounding teacher recruitment, training and retention in Malawi are interrelated in that they have direct impact on the quality of education provided. The UNESCO (2005:28) report argues that the achievement of universal participation in education will be fundamentally dependent on the quality of education available. According to the UNESCO (2005) report, the role of teachers is critical in ensuring quality education provision. For example, the report argues that quality education can be understood as how well pupils are taught and how much they learn, and furthermore as a consequence, how regularly parents send their children to school. The report further argues that parents will send their children to school when they appreciate the quality of education being offered. The report furthermore argues that a quality education should allow children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities (UNESCO, 2005:30). Other qualities of education as discussed by the UNESCO (2005:30) report include the following:

- *Learning to know* acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and 'external' elements.
- *Learning to do* focuses on the practical application of what is learned.
- *Learning to live together* addresses the critical skills for a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families and their communities.
- *Learning to be* emphasizes the skills needed for individuals to develop their full potential.

Based on the UNESCO standard of what quality education is, it is argued that in future studies, human capital theory which emphasises knowledge and skills should be complemented by the human capability theory. Sen's (2005) human capability theory discusses choices to choose what a person values to do and ways of being. Sen (2005) argues that human capability is the ability by people to use resources to achieve what they value in their lives and functioning as the activities that they undertake to be happy and live a long life. The argument of the human capability theory revolves around the freedom of human beings to have real opportunities to accomplish what they value. It is argued in this study that human capabilities such as opportunities for employment, and options after completing secondary education and/or university could be enhanced by skills and knowledge obtained through the implementation of

human capital theory. It would appear that the quality of education as defined by UNESCO takes into consideration both human capital and human capability theories as it covers issues of knowledge and skills, freedom to choose and be able to do what people decide. Thus the more educated/knowledgeable one is, the greater s/he recognises/appreciates the freedom and choices they have to realise their ambitions.

The sections below discuss local emerging issues from this study in the context of the education sector standards as defined by UNESCO (2005). The UNESCO (2005) report is relevant to this study as the Malawi education sector draws some of its guidance for implementing FPE from it (NESP, 2008-17). Furthermore, it provides a mirror to assess how well the Malawi education sector has conformed to the Dakar Declaration on Education For All by 2015 to which it is a signatory (ESIP, 2009-13). The Dakar Declaration on Education For All forms part of the UNESCO (2005) report.

5.1.1.5.1 Teacher recruitment

Based on the revelation by NESP (2008-17) that the Malawi government rushed in recruiting 18,000 teachers in 1994 to meet the demands of the influx of FPE and, Kayuni and Tambulasi quoting GoM (2001b) on the issue of government recruiting thousands of teachers without interviewing the teachers to meet the demands of FPE, it is argued in this study that the selection criteria for selecting candidates to attend teachers' training courses creates problems when it comes to the process of identifying qualified candidates for the teaching profession. As argued by the UNESCO (2005) report, teacher and education quality in this case would be compromised as poorly selected candidates for teachers' training would most likely not be able to conceptualise the pedagogical skills required to create the human capital needed for the development of the youth as argued by Obanya (1995). Obanya attributes poor quality education to poor recruitment and selection practices in teaching and teacher education. It is worrisome that the argument that Obanya made 22 years ago strongly appears to be relevant today. Interviewing teachers would ensure that only those individuals best qualified for the job are selected for teaching. It would also inform training needs for student teachers. According to NESP (2009-17), the 1994 teacher recruitment disregarded candidates' qualifications for the teaching profession. Due to high rural unemployment and poverty leading to urbanisation (Kayuni and Tambulasi,

2009; Montgomery, 2009 and Malawi People, 2012), it is argued that it is likely that some of the candidates accepted to join the teaching profession as a result of their desperation for employment. Interviews would most probably have helped to recruit the most qualified in terms of their passion for the job and teaching qualifications. It is against this approach to the recruitment of teachers that Obanya (1995) argues that recruitment of teachers ought to be rigorous and guided by a set of teaching qualification standards.

Kadzamira (2006), argues that the low status of the teaching profession among the general public and school leavers in particular has negatively impacted on recruitment standards for both primary and secondary school teachers. Kadzamira's argument serves to inform government that the welfare of teachers has a profound impact on the quality of human capital that enrolls for the teaching profession; there is need therefore to improve the welfare of teachers so that the profession attracts highly qualified persons.

Based on the recruitment trends discussed in this section, it is argued that the UNESCO (2005:28) report that argues that schooling helps children develop creatively and emotionally and acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for responsible, active and productive citizenship may not be achieved in Malawi. It is argued therefore, that the achievement of quality education should start from the processes of recruiting student teachers for training.

5.1.1.5.2 Teacher training

As discussed in section 5.1.1.5.4, rote teaching is one of the main features of the teaching pattern in Malawi primary schools. Whether this is used as a strategy to cope with the large numbers in primary school classes or as a standard teaching approach in Malawi primary schools, UNESCO (2005) faults this approach. According to the UNESCO report, this approach is a behaviourist theory approach that is based on dictating lessons to learners. The behaviourist theory approach assumes that learners should be lectured and does not provide opportunities for teacher interaction with learners as is the case in the humanist theory approach. The problem with the behaviourist approach is that it undermines critical thinking which is needed in the creation of human capital as

argued by Banda (2003) and Nudelman (2011). Pishghadam and Meidani (2012) describe the behaviourist approach as destructive and the humanistic as constructive.

Kunje (2003) argues that following the recruitment of teachers the government did not continue with the orientation of teachers on the new curriculum implemented in 1994 such that teachers implemented Standards 4 to 8 without being oriented. This raises questions about the quality of education in Malawi primary schools as teachers arguably were poorly recruited and trained. The failure to orient teachers on the new curriculum was a failure on the part of the government as issues of democracy and human rights brought in by the new government in 1994 were new concepts even to the already serving teachers (MoEST, 2002). This could mean that teachers in the country were not properly guided about the rights of children and consequently the children could not demand quality education for example, as it is one of their education rights as argued in the UNESCO (2005) report.

A Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) (2002) research study indicates that the relationship between teachers and head teachers is not desirable; citing poor training of head teachers as the underlying factor. It is argued in this study that if headship courses do not prepare head teachers to support their teachers, the risk of teachers not being emotionally fit to teach cannot be ruled out. It is further argued that head teachers' training/professional development should prepare them to identify shortcomings among their teachers and be able to provide relevant solutions so as to maintain quality education provision as how well teachers teach their pupils constitutes education quality (UNESCO, 2005).

Based on findings in chapter 4, the teacher training programme in Malawi needs revision:

“Although our training is said to be two years, it is actually less than one year as the second year we go for practical before being posted to schools. We never get the opportunity to discuss our experiences in college as we never go back. In the past, theoretical and practical work was done simultaneously in each of the two years. Teachers had the opportunity of sharing experiences with tutors”. The experience that student teachers acquire in their teaching practice is critical as it provides an opportunity to be informed about real life in the teaching profession. Furthermore, the student teachers can share their experiences with colleagues and tutors in college thereby enhancing their skills as they are posted to different areas with diverse academic, cultural and social orientations. The experiences would also add quality to the content taught in

the teachers' colleges. Experiences of the student teachers during teaching practice and results of inspections would improve the training content as it would inform the curriculum. The need to improve the teacher training curriculum is supported by a private secondary school teacher who argued: *"As a teacher, one must be equipped with skills to facilitate the process of human development. The Malawi teacher's training syllabus focuses on academic development. I think teachers must be trained to be agents of change in society"*. It is argued in this study that human capital development as supported by human capital theory does not only depend on academic qualifications but also on other factors as well. An example is the case of some of the university lecturers who have accomplished academic qualifications, but display low morals that lead to female students dropping out of university as reported in chapter 4. This example indicates that in its quest to implement education policies, government needs to provide comprehensive training for university lecturers, not just teachers; training that is informed by research on factors (as outlined in this study) that undermine equitable educational outcomes if educators across all phases of education are to be able to instil required knowledge and skills in the youth for their development.

It would seem that both literature (section 2.1.4.2) and respondents' views (in chapter 4) agree that school inspections or the lack of is more of a problem in rural than it is in urban areas. This observation is discussed more under decentralization as it has significant implications on the decentralization of education management. Based on the discussion in this section and NEP (2016), EMIS (2009–13), Ng'ambi (2010), Banda (2003), it is also clear that the government needs to review the training programme for teachers as it has a significant bearing on their ability to teach and train students. While improving the teaching curriculum is regarded as relevant, it could be argued that providing some of the retired well-trained teachers work contracts to mentor the young teachers and also to fill the shortages of teachers would be an innovative strategy in the improvement of education attendance. There could be some retired but still capable well trained and experienced teachers who could be ready to assist the government as teacher educators since resources to train new teachers may not be readily available.

Based on the quality of education as defined by the UNESCO report and issues emerging from this study, it would be difficult for poorly trained teachers to ensure that learning enables the youth to acquire knowledge and skills to enable them to be able to freely choose and be able to do what

they value in their lives. It could be argued that the Malawi primary school teachers' training curriculum needs to take into consideration the education quality standards set by UNESCO if human capital and capability are to be achieved.

The position of donors in supporting the education sector should be reviewed so that local education and training needs are given priority and support. Based on the UNESCO (2005) standards of quality education, specifically that learning should combine both indigenous and external elements, it is argued that donors' tendency of exerting pressure on Malawi to implement foreign education policies undermines the quality of education that Malawi needs.

It could be argued that the quality of teacher training in Malawi is an issue that demands the attention of government, NGOs and the general public if the quality of teachers in Malawi are to meet the objectives of the education policy (NEP, 2016) which is to provide quality education to all.

5.1.1.5.3 Teacher retention

Based on chapter 4, section 4.1.1.6, one of the major problems facing the Malawi education sector is the high turnover of teachers. This study argues that it is possible that the pressures surrounding the demand to train large numbers of teachers led to the 15-20% drop out of student teachers as argued by Kadzamira (2006). Another argument being advanced here is that some of the trained teachers are poorly recruited and not ready and fit for the job and therefore quit the profession. Mengel (2001) argues that nearly 80% teacher turnover is due to hiring mistakes. Kayuni and Tambulasi (2007) underscore the evidence that Malawi teacher turnover is high even by sub-Saharan African standards. It would appear that the Malawi government has not paid serious attention to issues of teacher recruitment and retention. Although the UNESCO (2005) report does not focus directly on teacher retention, the current education policy (NEP, 2016) underscores the importance of improving the welfare of teachers. Although the rhetoric is well defined in the policy, this study has identified numerous challenges indicating poor welfare of teachers especially in primary schools as discussed in section 5.1.1.4.

According to the UNESCO (2005) report, it argued in this study that teachers are at the centre for the achievement of quality education but issues emerging from this study give no confidence that the teachers can stay in the profession as their welfare is marred with challenges. Moleni and

Ndalama (2004), argue that teacher absenteeism and attrition are significantly influenced by poor working conditions.

According to views of respondents from this study, it is worrisome that government strategies for the retention of teachers have not worked. For example:

- Decentralisation of the education sector has not been effective as the government has not succeeded in providing financial and management autonomy to the district councils as argued by Hussein (2005) and Tambulasi (2009) and in section 4.3.6.5.2.
- Increased budget allocation to the education sector has been undermined by issues of corruption and failure by the government to decentralise fully the education sector as argued in 4.1.6.2 and by Hussein (2005) and Matonga (2015).
- Partnership with NGOs and the donor community has resulted in implementing donor biased programmes that usually do not address the local needs as argued by Chirwa (2012) and the limited number of NGOs working in the education sector in Malawi as discussed in section 5.1.5.3.

This study argues that it is a waste of the government's limited resources to train teachers who do not stay in the system. The Malawi government should invest in the welfare of teachers so that teachers are retained in the profession. Moreover, the quality of education is dependent on the quality of teachers in the schools.

5.1.1.6 School inspection

The discussion in the preceding section about the poor quality of teachers calls for the demand for school inspections to ascertain teacher quality. The ability of teachers to deliver a quality education is made worse when poorly recruited teachers are not inspected to monitor and evaluate their performance as argued by a government official in section 5.2.1. School inspections as argued by Wheelen and Hunger (1998), have the potential of providing action learning where problems would be identified and addressed. According to responses from teachers graduating from the Malawi Teachers' colleges, school inspections are poorly planned as there are no yearly inspections as used to be the case before the introduction of FPE (NESP, 2008-17). In the light of reports of pupil influx in primary schools as a result of FPE, this could mean that there are too many schools to be inspected against available qualified inspectors. This

study was not successful in finding out the number of inspectors that were available before the introduction of FPE. Teacher respondents in this study however argued that when the inspections are conducted, recommendations are never monitored as some of the recommendations demand financial support to implement which government usually struggles to provide. This study however, has not been successful in eliciting results of any evaluations or inspections of schools from government officials who cited bureaucracy as a reason for not sharing the results. The officials argued that there are guidelines for conducting inspections such as quality lesson plans and keeping of class registers. The officials further argued that school inspections are haphazard in both rural and urban areas due to funding issues. Unlike in the Zimbabwe case where Mupindu (2012) argues that decentralisation of the education policy has made it easier for local councils to conduct inspections and help address any issues arising, the Malawi case appears to be stuck with policy rhetoric of decentralisation of the education sector. It also appears that in cases where inspection reports are available, it becomes difficult to disseminate them due to limited qualified human capital as qualified persons prefer to serve in urban areas to rural as the latter are less attractive owing to their being neglected by government (Dulani, 2000). This problem appears to persist as Kufaine and Mtapuri (2014) argue that decentralisation efforts have not improved the public service delivery in the rural areas.

The current education policy, for example, gives an impression that schools undergo regular inspections to ensure quality of education is kept high. However, the situation on the ground is different as argued by a male rural primary school headmaster: *“There is a decline in school inspections. Writing of lesson plans is poorly done by most teachers and I think this is due to their poor training these days”*. It is argued in this study that school inspections are critical especially in Malawi where poor standards of education are long standing. It must be mentioned however that school inspections without a follow up with action steps to deal with identified problems would render the inspections useless. Therefore, a combination of school inspections and implementation of action steps to deal with issues arising would facilitate the improvement of the problem of teacher shortage and training. It is argued in this section that the lack of school inspections particularly in rural areas is a clear signal that the government is neglecting one of its most important duties, which is to ensure that its citizens get high quality education provision.

It could be concluded that full decentralisation of the education sector that includes fiscal and management autonomy as argued in chapter 2 section 2.1.4.2 is critical for Malawi if its education sector is to implement an effective strategic plan of school inspections. Arguably, the present education decentralisation approach is not in tandem with the expectation of the public as evidenced by the arguments in chapter 4 and section 2.1.4.

5.1.1.7 Frustrated teachers and poor education investment

This problem is acknowledged by respondents and in the literature. However, respondents' views go beyond just acknowledging the problem by discussing a number of issues which are believed to be underlying causes of the problem. For example, a focus group session of parents argued that: *"Teachers destroy teaching and learning materials due to their frustration with government over their salaries. The teachers tolerate students when they vandalize school property because the schools are government property"*. While this argument could be true, it is the view of the researcher based on other respondents' views that this problem cannot solely be blamed on vandalism. The revelation that vandalism in learning institutions is blamed on both teachers and students, it could be argued that the frustration of both teachers and students is the core issue that needs to be addressed. It could also be further argued that if teachers fail to stop students from vandalising education institution property due to their unmet needs, the outcome could be complex and has potential far reaching consequences. Examples are creation of a generation that is violent and retardation of education sector progress as funds would be used for repairs of damaged items instead of developing the sector. Teachers ought to take responsibility to sensitise the youths on the value of safeguarding school property as it plays a critical role in their education especially as the government appears to be struggling to make meaningful investments in the education sector.

One respondent argued that: *"The demand for supply of learning and teaching materials is increasing every day due to the ever increasing population and also partly due to other pressing needs like the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the persistent presence of hunger in the country. Corruption has also fuelled the problem of the lack of learning and teaching materials"*. It is the argument of this study that government has other responsibilities other than supporting the education sector. These other responsibilities also demand financial support such that it is not

always possible to provide adequate amounts of financial assistance required to address education sector problems including insufficient teaching and learning materials, but what is probably missing is proper management of the limited education sector finances as argued under corruption theory (Hussein, 2005 and by Matonga 2015). Based on the Cuba education success story, Kronenberg (2015) argues that Cuba invested heavily in its education system to make it world class. However, it is recognised that it is possible that in some cases government invests in the education sector as advocated in the human capital theory, but corruption cripples the investments as revealed by Matonga (2015). Issues about corruption are discussed comprehensively later in the chapter. Issues about population size appear to be neglected when allocating education sector resources as evidenced by the apparent bias towards supporting urban education (section 2.1.4.2) which is less populated than the rural. This argument serves to inform government to allocate resources for the education sector by considering population size as well as Banda (2003) suggests. The argument also serves to inform government to consider incorporating issues about population in the education curriculum so that the youth can grow with the appreciation of how population affects the social economic lives of citizens.

A secondary school teacher also argued: “*Secondary school syllabus is being poorly implemented because government has not provided enough text books in the schools*”. Failure to provide textbooks to schools betrays the objective of government to empower the youth to participate in national development as argued in the NYP (2013). The current outcome-based education (OBE) demands that students spend much time learning on their own by reading books. The lack of relevant books therefore makes it impossible for students to achieve this objective. As argued by Tabulawa (2003), the OBE system is shown to be a result of neo-liberalism that is responsible for international pressures on sub-Saharan Africa for curriculum change. The OBE is further evidence of failure by government to realise an indigenous post-colonial theory for education. Based on the discussion in this section it would appear that the major issue is matching investments in the education sector with demands. It is the argument of this study that government should ensure that resources meant for the education sector are properly utilized. It is also the view of the researcher that other issues such as decentralization of the management of the education sector could facilitate the proper directing of resources to the needed institutions. Human capital theory demands

investments in support for learning (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008) while Boehm (2007) reveals the effects of corruption on investments.

5.1.1.8 Bullying

Section 4.1.1.7 indicates that bullying is a significant education attendance inhibiting issue. Dunne et al. (2010) and Lipsett (2005) argue that bullying is associated with the vulnerable. The problem of bullying appears to be more significant in rural areas than in the urban (only 18 out of 75 urban youth compared to 70 out of 105 rural youth cited bullying as a problem affecting education attendance). One rural primary school girl who had dropped out of school said: *“We are defenceless and choose to miss school rather than having to be bullied on the way to and from school. Sometimes it happens in school; males and senior students are the ones that bully us”*. The revelation that girls are more affected than boys could be attributed to the argument advanced by a rural girl who said: *“Older boys do abuse and bully girls. We do not report such acts for fear of reprisals from the older boys”*. Such experiences expose the evil effects of a culture that favours males in various social and economic sectors. A secondary school teacher argued that: *“The issue of bullying is embedded in our culture. This has to do with male dominance over women. In almost all cases of bullying, it is males bullying women or small boys”*. Comments such as these show that differences in gendered power relations play a role in acts of bullying. The power imbalance is an issue of cultural orientation as discussed in greater detail in section 4.1.5.1. According to Hofstede’s (2009, 14) 5 dimensions of power, the ‘*large power distance*’ which is characterized by many hierarchy levels and acceptance that power has its own privileges among other characteristics could be working negatively for girls. If bullying of girls is not addressed, rural girls who are often overwhelmed with challenges to attend education, are likely to drop out of school. It is also likely that these girls would not be educated. Consequently, they are likely to discourage their children from attending school and thereby worsening the economic situation of the poor.

Bullying was reported to be worse on the way to and from school which suggests that the presence of teachers in schools is a deterrent factor against the perpetrators. However, it was noticeable that male teachers were less likely than female teachers to recognise the existence of bullying in schools. This is exemplified by a male rural secondary school teacher who argued that: *“Bullying*

is an anti-social behaviour of the past. I do not think it is any longer there". This denial of the existence of school bullying arguably provides no hope that teachers can help in ending the problem. It is against this background that the role of parents and communities become critical as they could help teachers to understand the problem of bullying, and how it impacts their children's educational experiences. The role of parents in education attendance is supported in human capital and motivation theories (Watters and Valerie et al., 2011 and Clark, 2006).

As well as parents and teachers there would also seem to be a role for religious leaders if bullying students is to end. However, the argument by a secondary school teacher in section 4.1.1.7: "*Why do the religious leaders not take this issue up? My opinion is that religious leaders are also guided by culture in the way they conduct their business*", could mean that issues surrounding culture are very difficult to deal with. The suggestion by the secondary school teacher makes sense because the majority of Malawians appear to respect religious leaders. However, as indicated by the secondary teacher, religious leaders may find it difficult to challenge cultural expectations (e.g. men having power over women). This demonstrates that bullying needs more than one stakeholder to deal with and should not be left only to the government or schools to address.

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Since bullying appears to affect the vulnerable more than the strong, and is more prevalent in rural areas, arguments by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001) suggesting that bullied children suffer social exclusion could mean that vulnerable children in Malawi could be alienated by the educated few. From the discussion in this section it would appear that bullying is a significant underlying cause for education non-attendance and therefore needs to be addressed. Based on Nnadi (2014), the potential risk of rural youth failing to be educated could mean that Malawi is creating a disempowered population that will not be able to bridge the gap that exists between the working and middle class. It is argued in this study that Malawi needs an emancipatory type of education (Howe and Covell's, 2010) that enables the youth to understand the nature of bullying and how to challenge it, and which also empowers them to become educated and migrate from poverty societies and form the middle class which appears to be struggling to grow and be sustained.

Since this study has not been successful in finding any Malawi literature source that discusses the problem comprehensively, it could be argued that bullying would remain an education attendance challenge that would go on un-attended. This study has attempted to address this problem in the proposed education strategy so that the youth can be empowered through education.

5.1.1.9 Curriculum irrelevance and education policy

The Government of Malawi, as stated in NESP (2009-17) has embarked on improving the education curriculum so that it meets the needs of Malawians. While this is a positive development, it is doubtful that the curriculum will include views of the people as the government has in the past failed to include important contributions from the public as discussed in section 2.2.2.2. An example of failure by the government to communicate the relevance of the school curriculum is the argument advanced by a female secondary school student: *“I do not know why we are forced to learn about the solar system or digestive system. Many of us just memorizes to pass.”* The argument made by the student agrees with the arguments made in section 5.1.1.4 that the better the academic results, the better the teacher but also the ability of students to memorise. It can be argued that passing examinations is one thing and to understand and apply concepts to situations is another. Memorising to pass is not the appropriate method of creating human capital as there is lack of critical thinking, which is a requirement in decision-making as argued by Banda (2003) and Nudelman (2011). Banda and Nudelman argue that critical thinking is essential in modern development. The revelation that some youth complain about physical exercise as argued by one student: *“We see no point in spending time in doing physical exercises instead of learning because we walk long distances to school which provides sufficient exercise”* means youth attend education without understanding the relevant implications of the subjects to their lives. This study argues that teachers should take time to explain to students about the value of the subjects they teach as this would motivate or help the students to make informed choices about what they prefer to achieve in life.

Based on the review of the various systems of education implemented in Malawi and on arguments advanced by MIE (2014–19), it is evident that the education curriculum needs review to accommodate subjects that serve the needs of the country. This suggested review of the curriculum is supported by respondent views advanced in section 4.1.1.8 about subjects such as the solar system. As argued in section 1.1, Malawi’s economy is dominantly agro-based suggesting that the

curricula ought to revolve around the improvement of the agriculture industry. For example, the upgrading of subsistence farming to commercial farming which entails the use of appropriate technologies to ease labour intensity in order to strengthen industrial processing of crops and animal products. This however does not mean that all subjects should focus on economic development as education also stimulates critical thinking. There are other countries such as the UK (Mansell, 2011) that have been debating replacing curriculum that is thought to be heavy with content i.e. “core knowledge”. The proposal is to shift from a curriculum that is dictated by teachers and authorities to one that is based on what knowledge students need.

Although delayed reviews of the curriculum as shown in Appendix A3 are well known, the government is moving slowly to address this challenge. The issues surrounding curricula are also a concern for teachers in schools with regard to implementation of the education policy. One urban primary school headmistress argued that: *“I have the responsibility of ensuring that my teachers understand the education policy but this is not always possible as government is failing to supply enough education policy copies. We are also not involved in reviewing the education policy”*. The argument by the headmistress, supported by primary and secondary school teachers is evidence that the government is missing a valuable opportunity to elicit feedback on the relevance of the education policy and curriculum. Primary and secondary school teachers are well informed about the needs of the education sector in general and their students in particular as they spend most of the time with them. It has become apparent in this study that Malawi policy makers need to shift from being essentialists to critics of their own action plans to address education sector problems.

Some of the issues that teachers argue should have been included in the education policy are:

- The role of the local communities and faith groups in addressing the education system
- Re-admission of the youth who have dropped out of school who still have the potential of learning
- The role of the private sector in improving education

Issues surrounding curriculum development in Malawi emanate from the British education system where the then colonial government unilaterally dictated the type of subjects to be taught in schools, as argued by Hauya (1993) and Mansell (2011).

It could be argued that implementing a curriculum that does not reflect the needs of the society is undermining the objective of the human capital theory of empowering citizens in general and youth in particular with knowledge and skills that they require in order to interact with the world in which they live rationally.

5.1.1.10 Academic boycotts in schools and universities

Based on the responses from five university and college lecturers and from all rural and urban primary and secondary school teachers in this study, the problem of academic boycotts is due to failure by government and academic staff to resolve their differences amicably. The issues of poor welfare of lecturers combined with delayed salaries as well as issues of academic freedom and funding in universities have not been addressed. The apparent abuse of power by politicians is a testimony that the colonial style of governance still dominates in Malawi. This argument is supported by a government official who argued: *“Government politicians often avoid dialoguing with lecturers and teachers as they feel too powerful to sit down with primary school teachers for example. The cosmetic commitments to improving education standards due to political agendas are a serious unattended problem”*. The revelation that some politicians feel too powerful to dialogue with teachers could be a test of the relevance of Malawian politics on national development and also Hofstede’s 5 dimensions of power effects which discusses privileges of power as discussed in section 2.1.4.2. The problem of power imbalance in this issue exposes the weakness of the decentralisation process because the politicians discussed in this case are high-profile politicians working from central government. Local but qualified politicians would most probably handle this issue as the politicians would be closer to where the problem is. However, based on the responses of four government officials, dialogue seems to be regarded as a sign of political weakness among some Malawi politicians. Based on Cuba education success story, it would be helpful for Malawi politicians to emulate the attitude of their Cuban counterparts who appear to understand and support the education of their citizens so that they contribute to governance issues of the country. While this argument might be debatable based on the differences in the systems of government that influences how citizens participate in governance matters, nevertheless, the principle aspect of politicians supporting the education of citizens is relevant.

Both male and female rural and urban students agreed that academic boycotts have contributed to some of the youth dropping out of school. A female urban secondary school student said: *“There*

are many things that happen when we are not attending school. Many of us drop out. Girls and those that struggle in class are often the victims of the boycotts". The revelation that boycotts lead to student drop out partly because students would take longer to complete their courses than planned is a serious negative development. The apparent government attitude of not engaging teachers in dialogue impacts negatively on the education policy of promoting education. The closure of the universities due to disagreements on the boundaries of academic freedom has brought with it unprecedented, complex challenges to university students and their families. According to university students, the closure of the universities has often led to delayed completion of their academic studies, as a result, some students graduate after six years instead of their formal four years. There are some students who are said to have graduated after seven years, three years longer than the set academic calendar. One lecturer argued: *"Government is at fault. How can it allow delays of academic calendars up to three years?"* The delay in completing university education leads to some parents being overwhelmed by financial responsibilities because they are forced to continue paying fees and supporting students during the delay while the students' siblings may be in need of support as well. Arguably, the extra years in the university means extra resources that could have been directed to other children in the family. According to section 4.1.1.9, the expenses on the extra years cause drop out of secondary school children as some parents may focus on the university student. Priority could be given to the university and college student as they are likely to support their siblings in school. It can be argued that while the government is advocating for the promotion of girls' education, the prolonged university closures result in some girls getting pregnant while at home as female students are more vulnerable than their male counterparts to cultural pressures such as expected roles of women in society as argued in section 4.1.1.9. The university closures could also be a factor that works against the motivation of other girls to attend education. (See Appendix A2 that exposes crises in public universities). The boycotts can also be considered to undermine the initiatives for women's empowerment and youth empowerment in general.

5.1.2 Family factors

Based on arguments by Tshireletso (2001), Chileshe et al. (2007), Zheng (2008) and Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011) and views of respondents, family factors are one of the least discussed but

critical causes for low education attendance. Just like school factors, family factors are as complex such as poverty resulting from trade and labour exploitation and overpopulation..

5.1.2.1 Poverty

Issues about trade and labour exploitation leading to poverty are discussed in this section. Although this study is not about poverty alleviation per se, the focus of the discussion centres around issues that government and other stakeholders such as NGOs and the international community should take into consideration so that families especially the rural could afford to support their children attending education. Moreover, the overall objective of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy is to reduce poverty through sustained economic growth and infrastructure development (MGDS, 2006–11:1). Based on the literature review and findings from this study, poverty is a complex phenomenon to deal with. For example, a male urban parent argued: *“Poverty in Malawi is a disabling factor in all sectors of life thus creating a vicious cycle of uncertainties”*. This argument shows that poverty is a social cross-cutting issue and is too large to be tackled by the education policy. However, for the sake of the problem of low education attendance, the policy could benefit from other policies such as the anti-corruption policy and poverty alleviation policy. The argument is that the education policy ought to be synchronised with other public policies so that problems that cannot be addressed within the education sector such as underlying causes of poverty are attempted within other sectors. For example, this study has identified the need to tackle corruption as a strategy to benefit the education sector. In this case the Anti-corruption bureau could address issues of abuse of funds for the education sector just like the Ministries of Trade/Industry and Labour could address issues surrounding trade and labour exploitation of the rural populations. The interventions would alleviate their poverty levels thereby making it possible for the rural populations to afford to pay fees for the education of their children. This study argues that when rural populations are able to pay fees for their children, the money allocated for bursaries would be used to address other school challenges such as lack of chairs so that pupils do not sit on cold or dirty floors as argued in section 5.1.1.2.

5.1.2.2 Overpopulation

Issues surrounding population are complex as they are entrenched in culture and religion. The arguments made by members of three focus group sessions consisting of five community members

and 10 male and female rural youths suggest that the situation of hunger and poverty is worse in villages because of overpopulation. Their arguments are echoed by Merrick (2002) who argues that poverty and large families are interlinked. Since human capital theory recognises education as a means to achieve a sustainable population, addressing poverty becomes critical as it directly affects the capacity of rural families to support their children attending education. Although there were differences in opinion about the causes of overpopulation among NGOs, it was however clear that all respondents agreed that population is an important factor as it affects the supply and demand of resources in families.

Although the Government of Malawi's Population and Housing census (2010) indicates that the Malawi population has grown at an alarming rate, government has surprisingly neglected population as an important variable for consideration in its education sector development plans. This is evidenced by the lack of discussion on the subject of population in the ESIP (2009–13). One of the rural girls interviewed said: *"I am in school because my uncle protected me from being forced out of school. My parents told me to drop out from school and give a chance to my brother to proceed as they could not support both of us"*. This revelation is evidence that population is a critical factor in resource distribution. It is worrying that the Joint Sector Strategic Plan (2013–17), Integrated Rural Development Strategy (2010), Country Strategy Paper (2010–2014) and the Malawi Millennium Development Goals (2009) neglect the discussion of population as an important influencing factor specifically in the education sector and development in general. The mismatch between class sizes and education materials supplied by government as discussed in section 5.1.1.6 bears testimony. The revelation by the World Bank Group (2014) and the Malawi Population Data Sheet (2012) that the Malawi population is growing rapidly (against economic growth) should motivate government to start paying serious attention on implications of overpopulation. Sensitising the youth in schools, colleges and universities about negative effects of overpopulation could be a long-term strategy option.

5.1.3 Motivation factors

Although literature such as Porter, (1980) suggests that motivation is as an important factor for good performance, it is strange that Malawi's education policy and subsequent strategic action plans do not explicitly give prominence to issues surrounding motivation. While the literature provides some understanding of the need to focus on motivation, the discussion is not

comprehensive enough to serve the purpose of increasing education attendance. It is the argument of this study that motivation is critical for achieving any of the theories discussed. For example, there must be a driving force for a youth to abandon activities that give fun and instead sit and listen to a teacher in class teaching subjects that may even be difficult to understand. As argued by Tan, (2013) citing Herzberg's Two Factor Theory on Work Motivation, Malawi needs a motivation strategy to complement other strategies to improve education attendance.

For the sake of this study, motivation is discussed in the context of teacher and student needs as supported by the literature and views of respondents. Watters and Valerie et al. (2011) and Clark (2006) argue that parents are critical in motivating their children to excel in education. However, a male upper primary school student argued that: *"Neither parents, teachers nor government officials discuss with us the challenges we face in attending education.* Arguably, parents and teachers take the youth for granted and neglect to engage them in discussing their challenges in attending education. This process would most probably lead to finding possible solutions to the challenges. It is possible that failure to interact with youth to discuss their challenges leads to student frustrations that are sometimes manifested in various forms such as drug and alcohol abuse as seen in chapter 4. Youth challenges could be unstable homes where the youth would need some kind of counselling. Although it is not evident from the findings presented here that this is the case, Winthrop (2013) and Sahni (2014) suggest that children from homes that are always fighting are likely to perform poorly in school. It appears that the NEP (2016) while addressing some pertinent issues surrounding education challenges, issues surrounding motivation are not given a priority and yet have the potential of undermining the objective of government of providing quality education to all in Malawi (NESP, 2008-17). Furthermore, the education policy acknowledges that there are weak networks between school and communities that would help to address challenges the youth face either in school or at home but falls short of designing sustainable strategies to create the networks.

Some respondents commenting on the matter argued that: *"In primary and secondary schools, teachers are mainly frustrated by the delays of their salaries which sometimes go up to two months. In universities, it is due to poor funding and infringement on the academic freedoms such as free speech on issues concerning government"*. Thus, the teachers and lecturers usually have their own problems to deal with, arguably making it difficult for them to focus on motivating students. When

asked to comment on the matter, a government official conceded that: “*Motivation of pupils and students is left to their teachers*”. The official could not verify whether the teachers are indeed doing as expected. It appears to be a tendency for government to expect things done without enforcing them as is the case with school inspections discussed earlier in the chapter. It is doubtful that frustrated lecturers would be interested to motivate students to take education seriously when they themselves seem not to be enjoying the fruits of their education.

Based on the theory of motivation, it is likely that the delay in salaries leads to frustration on the part of teachers as they would not be able to meet their basic needs such as paying rent, food and clothes. As presented in section 4.1.1.4, some teachers divert time for teaching to some other forms of income-generating activities thereby leaving students unattended. Neglecting classes only aggravates the problem of poor quality education as it is likely that teachers cannot finish the school syllabus. Failure to finish the syllabus could mean failure to teach students skills needed to participate in social and economic activities as stipulated in ESIP (2009–13). It is likely that such students would fail their exams leading to possible repetitions. EMIS (2013) and ESIP (2009–13) argue that there is direct correlation between repetitions and school dropouts especially among girls. This study argues that delayed salaries not only affect motivation of teachers but also indirectly influences school drop outs thereby increasing the number of unqualified citizens to contribute to the development of the nation and their own families. The argument advanced is that motivation for teachers is critical in ensuring that knowledge and skills that youth need are transferred otherwise the gap that exist in Malawi between the affluent and the poor is sustained or widened.

One hundred and sixty-six out of 180 male and female urban and rural youth both in and out of school overwhelmingly revealed the level of importance motivation holds in determining their levels of education attendance. The experience of the researcher has shown that motivation sessions play a critical role in influencing the youth to attend education. He experienced first-hand, the power of motivation when rural girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancies and early marriages in the Balanju district, were mobilised for counselling, mentoring and motivation. Their ages ranged from 12 to 17 years. (See Appendix A13 showing a project agreement between Denmark and ADRA Malawi to enhance the education attendance of girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancies.

Kadzamira (2003) has discussed factors that need to be addressed in order to improve school attendance. What appears to be lacking is the understanding of why some youth still do not attend education when they seem not to experience the challenges that prevent other youth from attending education. As evidenced by responses of the youth and Chugh (2011), lack of motivation appears to be one of the possible factors. Although culture is discussed separately later in the chapter, it has some relevance on motivation as well. This study has identified that culture; school and home environment provide critical influence for youth to attend education. For example, typically in Malawian culture, a child belongs to the community. It is the responsibility of the members of the community to provide for needy children. The problem nowadays is that people have become individualistic due to socio-economic hardships. This is why there is an increasing number of orphans on the streets. An official from an NGO dealing with street kids argued that: *“Education low attendance among many of the street kids under our custody is due to psychological needs; they lack motivation”*. Arguably, Malawi culture is rich with stories that can easily serve to motivate. If the culture of telling motivational folk stories can be used as a strategy for promoting education attendance, it is possible that children would find relief from their frustrations. During folk storytelling, children are given the chance to ask questions around the folk tales. The education policy through school committees could initiate this method since it has proven to be an effective technique when used with many youth, including the researcher. It is the argument of this study that Miguel and Kremer (2004) and Hild et al. (2007) argument about strong links between human capital theory and education/training could be weak if issues surrounding motivation are neglected.

5.1.3.1 Lack of nursery schools

Callaghan (2000–2015) and Media Wales (2013), argue that children that have received counselling and support before primary education have demonstrated to do better in class than those who have not attended nursery schools. Nursery schools are discussed in this section because they contribute to the motivation of children to attend schools as argued by Callaghan. Based on literature and respondents’ views, nursery schools offer a profound foundation for the children to stay in school when they start school. For example, a primary school teacher said: *“Many rural primary school pupils are ill prepared when starting school since their parents are less educated or uneducated. The transition from the home environment to the school environment can be critical for children. Nursery schools facilitate the transition.”* The teacher’s arguments are corroborated

by Media Wales reports about Professor Edward Melhuish's study that showed that pre-school attendance improved children's cognitive development and aspects of social behaviour. It is argued that the nursery schools provide an opportunity for children to learn how to interact with other children from various backgrounds and how to receive instructions from a teacher other than their own parents. While it may not be possible to construct the nursery schools as needed in the country, innovative strategies could be tried such as using church and mosque spaces. The argument being advanced is that rural nursery schools could also be strategic forums for sensitising children about the negative impact of some cultural practices on their potential to excel in education. It is assumed that community leaders would be in support of the teaching against cultures that frustrate the education of rural girls.

In conclusion, it is fair to state that motivation issues have been taken for granted in the education policy action plans. There is need for a deliberate specific policy strategy to address issues surrounding motivation if the objective of government of ensuring quality education access (NEP, 2016), is to be achieved. It is also fair to state that human capital theory achievement without application of motivation theory arguments is most probably difficult.

5.1.4 Cultural factors

Based on the emerging issues surrounding culture in this study, it is fair to argue that the education policy has grossly underrepresented and in some cases omitted the importance of addressing effects of culture on education attendance especially in the rural areas.

5.1.4.1 Traditional cultural beliefs and practices; globalisation (empowerment of women)

In order to understand the implications of culture on education, arguments advanced by a female urban secondary school teacher are critical: *"There is a culture of bias towards males regarding opportunities to attend education especially in rural areas. The rural population believe that girls will be supported by their husbands and therefore education is not very necessary for them"*. It is possible that this reasoning is influenced by the patriarchal family system in Malawi. In Malawi, it is believed that married women are mostly under the dictatorship of their husbands. Parents may not want to spend their money on educating girls who will end up being 'ruled' by their husbands. From this belief, the parents may not see the value of educating their daughters. This is why the secondary school teacher revealed that the expectation is that the husband will take care of the

wife. This scenario is an example of a case where traditional leaders and other community opinion leaders are needed in the management of education for their people so that in the process they would appreciate the value of educating girls. Moreover, Malawi has examples such as Joyce Banda (Malawi's first female president), and my secondary school female teachers as argued in sections 3.4.1.1 and 3.4.2 who have excelled in education and have served in high positions in spite of the cultural challenges. This study argues that it is possible to change the cultural practices and present Malawi girls especially those from the rural areas with opportunities to excel in education. Culture has proven to be dynamic as evidenced by the acceptance of wearing of long trousers by women in Malawi; wearing of trousers by women was taboo before 1994 when Malawi became a democracy. The revelation by NESP (2008–17) and chapter 4 responses that urban youth tend to excel in education over their rural counterparts can be attributed to the effects of culture on education attendance. It is argued that the negative effects of culture on education attendance are contradicted by human capital theory as the theory is not gender biased. Therefore both girls and boys should be given equal opportunities of empowerment.

However, it strongly appears that the government has overlooked the critical negative impact of culture as evidenced by arguments made by a traditional leader: *“Taking care of the sick is the work of women as they wash and cook. This is not for men. When there is illness do you discuss education?”* The attitude of the traditional leader is evidently responsible for the arguments advanced by rural secondary school girls who said: *“It is not easy for us to learn as we get tired from having to walk long distances to fetch water and we often sleep in class. Time for study is rarely found”*. What is alarming is that government policy or decentralisation structures do not engage traditional leaders in addressing these cultural challenges. The complication rising from this situation is that children born from these oppressed women are likely to be oppressed as well because the mothers may not have alternative ways of bringing up their children, according to Chilimampungu (2005). It is argued in this study that girls live far from the amenities they need in rural areas, and the schools are equally far from their homes. So they are not only affected by patriarchal cultural expectations of subservience to men but this is compounded by the lack of provision of schools near their homes. This means that girls in rural areas are constantly tired and do not come to school ready to learn because they are tired from their chores and having to walk far to get to school. Interestingly, girls in urban areas may still have cultural expectation challenges

but the greater provision of schools and presumably transport to get to school make it easier for them to access education.

Given the educational experiences of girls reported in this study, it is not surprising that Kanyongolo and Malunga (2011) and White (2010) advocate for the liberation of women from cultural practices that oppress them. Kabeer's (1999) theory of empowerment for women could offer some tips to government as it focuses on strategies for dealing with oppressive cultures. However, her theory falls short of appreciating cultures that promote learning life skills. The possible risk of insensitive condemnation of cultural practices, as Kabeer appears to do, is that it creates resistance to attempts to modify the oppressive cultural practices. While culture has negatively affected rural girls' education, it is important to be cautious about approaches for dealing with such negative cultural beliefs. Positive cultural practices are encouraged by policy (Malawi Government, 2013). Harcourt and Escobar (2013) suggest that it is possible to promote the viability and autonomy of traditional cultures while still allowing space for change within those cultures. This can be a practical strategy for engaging various local cultures in promoting youth education in general and girls in particular. Based on the discussion in this section it is argued that human capital creation is not just dependent on classroom experience, but also other factors such as culture.

Hope for improved rural girl's education attendance can be a reality based on the interest from rural females to be educated as argued by a female community member who suggested that: *"If the government were to pass a law that protects girls from such burdens, girls would achieve their life aspirations of being educated"*. This suggestion provides evidence that females in rural areas would want to be educated. The interest to be educated provides a positive assumption for the proposed strategy to improve rural female education. Based on this study, it is evident that passing laws or formulating policies are not an end in themselves as the main problem is implementation. The issues surrounding policy implementation are discussed under policy issues.

Issues about culture not only affect education attendance, but also threaten the lives of women in Malawi as evidenced by the argument advanced by a retired female secondary school teacher who said: *"Girls are pressured to engage in ritual sexual activities. The consequences are unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases"*. It is argued that due to the sexually transmitted

diseases, a nation of sick people cannot develop because resources would need to be re-directed to health care service delivery instead of investing in education or other development sectors.

The argument by a traditional leader who suggested that the government is neglecting the impact and influence of Western cultures on education attendance; citing the showing of pornographic videos is true but could be a strategy of avoiding responsibility over the negative effects of culture. This study strongly argues that government should engage these traditional leaders in addressing the cultural issues as they may not see the value of educating girls. The perspectives of traditional leaders concerning pornographic videos warrants further comment as these videos are commonly sold in Malawi and potentially could have the same effect as sexual rituals. The arguments by the traditional leader bring about a new way of looking at culture. While local cultures have been the central focus, it is clear from the views of rural respondents in sections 4.1.5.1 and 4.1.5.2 that issues of human rights, for example, are making it difficult for parents and teachers to discipline students. The impact of pornographic videos and indiscriminate distribution of condoms are considered as factors influencing early sexual debuts among children. One traditional leader had this to say on the matter: *“It is ironic that the government allows harmful Western cultures to distract the youth from education and yet blame the local cultures that are less harmful. Government says we teach girls about sex at a very young age. Who allows condoms and contraception in the community? What are they for? Is there an age limit written on the condoms?”* Based on this argument, it could be deduced that issues of cultural practices and their subsequent negative impact on education attendance are broader than presented in some literature. The argument advanced in this study is that there is need to include both local and Western culture negative impact mitigation action steps in the proposed education strategy. It would appear that the influence of Western culture on Malawi education sector has not been sufficiently researched. It is also possible that condoms which are a Western product could be used to mitigate the impact of sexual rituals which are a local practice by using them to reduce school pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Another important point is that the eight-year period of primary education when parents are not paying fees could be a critical period in the sense that parents may have been used not to pay school fees. The struggles of finding fees are likely to become a new phenomenon and could work against the continuation of education for their children especially that in some cultures girls are

not expected to go beyond primary education. It is argued that it would not be easy for parents coming from such cultures to find the motivation to find money to pay fees. Arguably for them the girls would have attained the level of education accepted in the culture. Probably a reduced school fee programme could solve this challenges as well as increasing revenue to support the education sector.

Although education is the main source of human capital, arguments advanced by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001) caution that education could also be a source of exclusion of some groups of the population. Thus there is a need to improve education attendance for both rural and urban areas so that the gap between the educated and less educated is reduced.

It is fair to conclude in this section that issues surrounding culture are not given the attention they deserve in order to improve education attendance especially among rural populations.

5.1.5 Governance factors

Both literature (Hauya, 1993 and Matonga, 2015) and data emerging from this study point out politics as one of the critical governance factors influencing education attendance in Malawi both directly and indirectly. A policy direction such as the quota system of selecting students to public universities is an example of a direct influence while corruption and decentralization are the indirect influence. Quota system, corruption and decentralization are discussed in this chapter.

5.1.5.1 Quota system of selecting students to public universities

While the quota system² aims at providing equal opportunities for the youth of Malawi to attend university education as argued by a government official in the ministry of the office of the president and cabinet, the system is unpopular according to the views of respondents. A government official argued: *“There are many bright students especially the Tumbuka who are denied the opportunity to study in our public universities because of the quota system. The quota system is meant to favour the Lhlomwe; the tribe of the president. I am at pains to approve names of less qualified students at the expense of those who are qualified to attend university education”*. It is argued that the quota

²Quota system is the method of selecting students to public universities that involves predetermination of numbers students to be selected from each district. This means that merit could be undermined.

system is an example of abuse of power by politicians that appear to alienate the Tumbuka tribe which is a minority tribe in Malawi. It is further argued that the Tumbuka youth who are denied the opportunity to attend university education are potentially being subjected to social exclusion. This argument appears to agree with critics of human capital theory that education can be a source of social exclusion where the educated have powers to exclude the vulnerable who would usually have limited choices for earning a living. It is argued that the minority tribe that is less developed needs education to be able to emancipate themselves from the evil cycle of poverty as a result of limited capabilities to manage their lives. The quota system of selection most likely excludes bright youth that would make an effective middle class with possible economic and social skills as Nnadi (2014) and Fitzsimons (1999) argue. Ministry officials argued that some bright students who pass exceptionally well are left out of the selection process: *“The quota system has allowed underperforming students to find places in the public universities”*. The ministry official did not provide any statistics to support this argument and this study has not been successful in establishing statistics to support the claim. Nevertheless, the point made by the official could be valid based on the premise that the official works in the ministry of education and is assumed to be knowledgeable about the challenges in the education sector. Furthermore, the argument in chapter 4, section 4.1.1.9 and 4.2.1.1 that the quota system was a political decision serves to strengthen the suspicion that the quota system decision was not made based on technical recommendations. While the argument by an official from the office of the president and cabinet appear to make sense: *“The quota system provides an equal opportunity to all youth from all the districts in Malawi to access university education”*, it is argued that provision of equal opportunities to all youth to attend university education could be done by building more universities otherwise the quota system raises some questions about the value of taking examinations. Arguably, the official is supposed to be loyal to the political government that hired him. This could be a typical case of how politics overrides objectivity. The quota system is even more impacting on Tumbuka girls who are already living in less developed areas as their aspirations to acquire knowledge and skills to live a better life than they currently are could be frustrating. It could be argued that the quota system has the potential of undermining efforts to empower females especially girls from rural areas that would otherwise remain trapped in poverty.

5.1.5.2 Corruption (weak internal controls leading to abuse of public funds)

Based on literature and views of respondents in sections 4.1.1.6; 4.1.2.1.1 and 4.1.5.2, the underlying issues leading to corruption are abuse of power by powerful and influential persons; weak internal control and transparency systems. A government official argued: *“I usually get directives to award contracts to those favoured by the government of the day. We do not follow the public procurement policy. Nobody asks questions as there are no internal controls here”*. This revelation exposes some of the underlying reasons for the poor quality of services in the public sector. It is argued in this section that all other underlying causes can be identified and strategic action plans designed but if corruption is tolerated, there will always be minimal achievements in addressing problems. It is not surprising that Malawians strongly believe that the real evil derailing Malawian development is corruption as a rural male parent argued: *“Unless corruption is stopped, the problem of low youth attendance in schools will persist. Unfortunately it is the leaders whom we trust to develop this country that are diverting funds for their business empires”*. It would seem that the effects of corruption on education are well known, because Poisson (2010) argues that there is a link between education and corruption. Poisson further argues that improving transparency and accountability in the education sector could be a strategy to reduce corruption. While the current education policy discusses a number of education-inhibiting factors, issues of corruption are silent; it is as if they do not exist. This is probably why Hussein (2005) argues that it is not easy to stop corruption in Malawi because it involves influential and powerful individuals. Corruption also threatens the quality of graduates from public universities as it also influences the outcome of examinations as argued by some of the youth in school from urban and rural areas as exemplified by the following comment: *“Corruption has compromised the value of examinations as examination papers are sold to the rich. Due to this practice, some intelligent students who could have continued their education fail to proceed”*.

The mere suggestion by respondents that corruption should be stopped by arresting the culprits may not necessarily solve the problem. The argument being advanced is that since education has proven to be a vehicle for transforming people (Nnandi, 2014; Fitzsimons, 1999; Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008) and that corruption appears to be the cancer (Poisson, 2010 and Matovi, 2011), it would be logical to utilise the education system as a long-term strategy to educate the youth about the evils of corruption. It is also possible that the introduction of public service reform could

address some of the challenges surrounding corruption. Since the issue of corruption is too complex to be addressed in this study, it is recommended that a research to identify the most effective strategies of reducing corruption be conducted if Malawi is to get corruption out of the way of implementing programmes aimed at building the capacity of youth to develop through education and training.

5.1.5.3 Decentralisation (resistance to empower local structures)

Based on data emerging from chapter 4, section 4.1.6.3: “*Due to the failure to provide financial support to the district councils it has been difficult to deal with the challenges faced by primary schools and community day secondary schools in the districts*”, it can be argued that the claims by government (MoEST, 2010) and The Malawi National Commission for UNESCO (2004) that the education system in Malawi has been decentralized is only policy rhetoric. It would appear that Nthenga’s (2000) recommendation that the education system should be decentralised was acknowledged but not implemented. Failure to implement policy and research based recommendations on the part of government is one of the outstanding features which need some serious attention. This is why this study has taken special interest to identify underlying causes for the persistence of some of the education sector challenges as they should have been addressed since policy and some research studies have identified them. Failure to support primary and secondary schools in the districts could be an explanation for the poor education service in rural areas as argued in chapter 4, section 4.1.6.3. Although Malawi has private schools, children of the poor cannot afford to pay fees to attend. Owing to the majority of the population being poor, it is probably why Chimombo (2009) questions whether private schools are a solution to the education needs of Malawians. The problem that could result from poor education services in rural areas is urbanization as observed by Kayuni and Tambulasi (2009) who estimate that Malawi will have 44% of its population living in urban areas by 2044 and Malawi People (2012) which argues that the urbanisation rate is at 5.6% of the annual growth of cities in Malawi. Furthermore, urbanization carries the risk of anti-social behaviours developing/exacerbating thereby making the country unfriendly for development. It is further argued that deprivation of the rural areas with quality education services has the potential of frustrating the chances of girls who are already overburdened by cultural forbidding factors for education attendance. Consequently, Malawi will likely continue to create a society of women who are disempowered and oppressed. It could also

be argued that education sector decentralization would create space for community leaders to participate on issues surrounding the education of youth from rural areas. Based on human capital theory, it is argued that the participation of community leaders' in the management of education also provides them knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. The assumption is that community education committees would be dealing with issues such as the value of promoting education for rural youth including girls; the discussions are likely to shape their world view about education as Nsapato (2010) and Palen (2001) seem to suggest. In the case of this study, the potential value is that the community leaders could be influenced to pioneer the getting rid of cultural forbidding factors for female education attendance. It is also argued that the involvement of the community leaders in the education committees has the potential of empowering them with knowledge and skills that would enable them to start to question how government is managing the education sector. It is argued that decentralisation of the education sector management has the potential of empowering community leaders to demand education rights for their people. Moreover, human capital theory (Nnadi, 2014; Fitzsimons, 1999 and Marshal, 1998) does not specify that development of human capital is only dependent on formal education.

Research studies (EMIS, 2003, Malawi Government, 2013, UNESCO, 2008) indicate that rural areas are less served with development resources. Failure by the government to devolve power to the local councils could explain why many rural areas are deprived of teachers as argued by an embassy official: *"Due to the failure to provide financial support to the district councils, it has been difficult to deal with the challenges faced by primary schools and community day secondary schools in the districts"*. It is difficult to see the government's motive for not devolving education because it advocates for the improvement of rural areas, including education (PIF, 2010) and it even has a decentralisation slogan *"mphamvu kwa anthu"*, which means "power to the people". However, this study's findings suggest that the government is suffocating the very strategies it believes would achieve rural development. For example, as a respondent observed: *"Funding from the central government takes too long to reach the impact area at the local government level. Sometimes, the funding is embezzled by some government officials and contractors or suppliers of items or services"*. As well as an inability to resource decentralisation effectively, the problems surrounding education sector decentralization could be an indicator of the resistance of

government to undertake a paradigm shift from a colonial education management system management to a post-colonial system which seek to ensure through appropriate resourcing that all benefit from educational provision.

This study contends that decentralisation of the education sector is essential. Based on proximity principle (Morris, 2013), it is also argued that the nearer the education management base is to the education institutions, the more likely it will offer effective support to education institutions. Although Chikoko (2009) and Winkler and Yeo (2007) warn that there is no automatic link between decentralisation and improvement of education quality, it is argued that the proposed education strategy has also been informed by a risk assessment tool (see table 6.1) that aims at reducing the impact of factors that would undermine its effectiveness. The strategy also draws on the experiences of countries that have decentralised their education system such as Zimbabwe (Mupindu 2008). From such experiences it is understood that issues such as weak transparency and accountability systems leading to corruption and political interference need to be checked. Moreover, Hinsz, Meyers and Dammert (2006) argue that due to decentralisation, East Asian countries have been successful and are characterized by teachers' understanding of their demand in rural areas. Furthermore, the Millennium Consulting Group (2006) attributed the failure of local government in Malawi to implement education programmes to limited financial support from the central government. Based on Boehm (2007), decentralization can be a strategy for reducing corruption levels. However, it is acknowledged that this is unlikely to happen if full decentralisation does not occur. For this to happen all parties with a role in education will need to be involved. Yet it is understood by the arguments advanced by respondents and Dulani (2003) that CSOs have not been helpful in influencing government to devolve power to local structures exposes another critical issue requiring attention if government is to be lobbied to implement decentralization. One respondent suggests that: *"There is no way decentralization can be effected in Malawi without pressure from CSOs and the citizens, government cannot voluntarily devolve power. Another problem is that only few CSOs focus on education in their work"*. This argument serves to inform this study about the need for CSOs to be provided with a space for facilitating processes of providing education and training to the youth for their empowerment.

From the above it is possible to conclude that the apparent failure to decentralise the Malawi education sector has undermined women's empowerment and the possible fight against corruption so that youth can access the knowledge and skills required for their empowerment.

5.2 Effects of education and youth policies on education attendance

This section discusses specific impacts of the education and youth policy directions. To do this, the discussion analyses the relevance of the policies to the process of addressing challenges associated with education attendance.

5.2.1 National Education Policy

According to NEP (2016) the education policy among other objectives seeks to improve the quality of education in Malawi. One of the policy action plans is to conduct school inspections in order to identify and address problems. A government official argued that government is struggling to support the implementation of school inspections: *“Failure to supervise schools has led to poor quality education and gross immorality among teachers and students. There are growing incidents of drug and alcohol abuse among girls and boys in schools”*. Based on Mazurkiewicz, Walczak and Jewdokimow, (2014) who argue that school inspections are taken seriously in Poland where inspections/evaluations are conducted by local and external experts, it is argued that the Malawi education sector should apply the same. School inspections have the potential value of providing action learning where problems would be identified and addressed in the process as recommended by Wheelen and Hunger (1998). Failure to conduct inspections in schools could make it difficult for government to assess the relevance of the education system and also quality of education being offered. In the context of Malawi, school inspections would probably provide an opportunity for teachers and the authorities to discuss some of the concerns such as: *“Our education policy revolves around the needs of the West”*. It is critical for Malawi to tailor its education system to address its own problems as Shizha (2006) advised Zimbabwe. However, it may not be easy for Malawi to follow its home-formulated education policy because of overdependence on foreign aid as argued by Chirwa (2012). It is argued that the foreign education system that Malawi follows as argued in chapter 2 may be the reason for some of the challenges facing the education sector as needs of Malawi are different from those of the British for example.

It is observed in this study that the government spends resources reviewing and formulating new policy editions without much focus on the underlying reasons for the policy failures. As argued by Hauya (1993) and MIE (2014–19), all the previous education policies missed an opportunity to address the pertinent needs of the people in Malawi. It is argued in this study that government should be bold enough to tackle complex and sensitive issues undermining the achievement of policy aims and objectives otherwise national initiatives such as empowering of youth and women through knowledge and skills would not be realised. Arguments like: *“The policy should have discussed the role and operation of the private schools because some private schools regard students as customers and neglect the importance of instilling discipline in them”*, and *“Private school owners need to focus their attention on the needs of the youth to develop into responsible citizens and not just making money”*, serves to inform that there is laxity on the part of government to formulate and enforce policies that would facilitate the improvement of the education sector. This study argues that although private schools do not fall under public school management, a deliberate policy should be formulated and enforced that would ensure that private schools address the needs of the nation at the national and local level.

It is assumed in this study that there is high likelihood that improved quality education would also improve knowledge and skills that youth acquire from schools, college and universities.

The identification of the three thematic areas in the ESIP (2009–13), namely: access and equity; quality and relevance; governance and management, appear to be sufficient to guide the formulation of action plans to address the education sector challenges. The argument is that the three thematic areas are coherent with the needs of people as argued in various sections of chapter 4. However, policy and strategic action plans have not fully responded to these stated needs. This is evidenced by the persistence of the challenges in the education and youth development sectors as argued by Hauya (1993), ESIP (2009) and EMIS (2013) and as argued by respondents: *“The current education policy does not address the most critical problems affecting the quality of education and poor attendance in schools”*. While the argument advanced by the NGO official has some truth, it is fair to state that there are some positive contributions that the government is making towards the development of the education sector. For example, giving preferential treatment to female students in order to increase their attendance in education is such a positive issue (Chimombo, 2005). This approach will ensure that women are empowered in Malawi

because education will help them carve out a better life for themselves. However, as evidenced by this study the problem is that there is a partial focus on education sector issues since some critical issues that undermine the positive contributions are neglected. The concerns of this thesis are the gaps that exist between the needs in the education sector and the contents of policy and flaws in its implementation. For example, ESIP (2009–13:49) argues that ‘if enrolment is to increase to achieve a NER (National Enrolment Rate) ratio of 100% by 2017, resolving the issue of inadequate infrastructure and its effective utilisation is imperative’. It can be argued that although there is a clear identification for the need to provide adequate infrastructure, failure to address underlying issues such as frustrated teachers, weak transparency and accountability systems and decentralisation could render the policy action weak. It is argued that unless the education policy focuses on pertinent issues, the objectives stipulated in the policy are likely not going to be achieved. Failure to achieve the education policy objectives would directly mean a disempowered youth who cannot make informed decisions in society.

One of the emerging profound failures of implementing the education policy effectively is that it has given room for private schools, colleges and universities to flourish. While this development could be positive, it only benefits a few in Malawi as it facilitates the creation of an elite society at the expense of the poor.

5.2.2 Creation of an elite society

As stated in chapter 1, Malawi is a poor country where the majority citizens depend on public schools to educate their children. Based on chapter 4, section 4.2.2, only the privileged few send their children to private schools. Having established that FPE does not help in creating an effective human capital for Malawi, it has emerged in this study that the failure by government to support the education of the poor majority through public schools, colleges and universities has enabled the private sector to step in and consign human capital creation to the upper class. A university lecturer put forward that: *“About 80% of university students are selected from private secondary schools where children of the rich attend. Teachers in these secondary schools are highly motivated as their welfare is well looked after”*. This observation is a critical issue which requires urgent attention if Malawi is to develop. The revelation by the lecturer that at least 80% of university students are selected from private secondary schools which are dominated by the children of the rich serves to strengthen the argument advanced by Klasen (1999), Muddiman

(2000) and Lyon (2001) that cautions that education could also be a source of exclusion for some groups of the population.

The dominance of the children of the elite in public universities would make it difficult for the children of the poor to access college and university education because private universities demand high fees which only the rich can afford. It could be true as a parent and ministry of education officials argued that government is deliberately neglecting the public schools because the children of the rich, that include the children of the politicians in government, do not attend the public schools. Another challenge of creating an elite society is that it is unlikely that the elite human capital would accept to work in decentralised structures in the rural districts as life in the rural areas could be too hard for the elite. The creation of an elite is likely to cause bottlenecks in providing qualified staff in the districts. The apparent exclusion of the poor children worsens the poverty levels in the rural areas because the uneducated children are less likely to be able to support their children in the pursuit of education. It is argued that no theory underpinning this study favours the rich over the poor. Therefore, it is argued that policy direction in Malawi should be tailored and implemented to avoid social exclusions through education provision as warned by Klasen (1999), Muddiman (2000) and Lyon (2001).

5.2.3 National youth policy

The National youth policy is discussed in this section as it also echoes youth empowerment through education. The discussion in this section centres on the impact of youth policy on education attendance and empowerment of youth in Malawi.

5.2.3.1 Impact of policy on youth education and development

Just like the education policy, the Malawi youth policy appears poorly informed to help improve the welfare of the youth as evidenced by respondents' views: *"Some of the critical issues identified in the youth policy such as the challenge of urbanization and deviant behaviours are superficially addressed. The youth policy is struggling to address challenges which could have easily been tackled in the education sector"*. Unlike the Malawi youth policy which simply outlines needs of youth and how government would empower them without demonstrating the understanding of the complex factors surrounding the youth challenges, Thailand and China youth policies are detailed with challenges and possible strategies to address the problems. For example, the Thailand Youth

Policy (2007) discusses how education and training would be implemented to empower the youth and also how youth will be supported after undertaking artisan trainings such as provision of materials for starting up their entrepreneurship.

Ngan-Pun et al. (2011) argues that China has embarked on integrating some elements of Western culture into its youth policy. The rationale for understanding and integrating Western cultures is to prepare the Chinese youth to have a background of understanding Western culture. This is probably why a female urban parent cited an example saying: *“The youth strive to buy expensive Western clothes and gadgets which they cannot afford which leads to some of them to resort to stealing”*.

This study argues further that there is need for Malawi to sensitise its youth about the implications of some of the Western cultures which appear to be taken for granted.

The need to invest in education research appears to be a strong voice coming from this study: *“There is need for more research on the listed challenges in the education and youth development sector as they are not comprehensive enough to enable strategic programming for youth development to take place”*. Research studies and the utilisation of results would help in formulating up to date policies that would address current and relevant education sector challenges as argued by Hudson and Kyeampong (2016).

It is encouraging to note that all the issues identified in this study as policy implementation challenges except for one, are covered in the current public service reform policy and strategic plan (‘Malawi Public Service Charter’, Republic of Malawi, 2014 and Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2014). While the researcher is privileged to be a stakeholder in its implementation (see appendix k), the findings from this study demonstrate how much work remains to be done to effectively address the challenges highlighted.

5.3 Challenges in implementing policies

This section aims to understand the critical challenges stifling the implementation of the education and youth policies so that contribution to the body of knowledge and the proposed education strategy is informed.

5.3.1 Limited policy enforcement

Although the CSOs could be blamed for weak advocacy programmes to support education attendance as argued by Dulani (2003) it could also be argued that the absence of laws that allow people to access public information make it difficult to establish real issues that need advocacy: *“Government applies the archaic public security act as an excuse to prohibit access to public information”*. It is argued in this study that government prohibits its citizens from accessing public information as a strategy of preventing the exposure of public funds mismanagement and bad governance records. This practice by government is reminiscent of the colonial governance. In the absence of such laws, it is hard for Malawians and CSOs to elicit public information from government to inform their actions. This practice is not in tandem with principles of democracy such as transparency and accountability. This could be the reason why corruption has emerged as one of the critical underlying causes of low education attendance: *“It is often difficult to review policies due to limited funding allocated to various government departments”*. It is argued that unless governance challenges are addressed it would be difficult to support the youth to acquire knowledge and skills for their empowerment. Appendix J shows the current strategic objectives which are faced with challenges of enforcement.

5.3.2 Donor pressure

It would appear that the government has no control over its own policy formulation and implementation as argued by Chirwa (2012) and respondents' views: *“Sometimes donors force government to implement reforms without due consideration of the context of Malawi”*. This problem is prevalent arguably because Malawi has not economically emancipated herself from her former colonial masters. The issue of donor interference in national plans is significant as it has been discussed in the literature and also argued by respondents. The interference of donors is a sign that the post-colonial theory of Malawi is at the mercy of donors as they provide funds and conditions for its implementation. It is argued in this study that while blaming donors on Malawi's educational problems is necessary, it would be helpful going forward to ensure that Malawi utilizes its financial resources for the intended development programmes such as education to reduce donor dependence.

5.3.3 Delayed policy reviews

Based on the literature reviewed and views of respondents, it is argued that public policy reviews are not taken seriously: *“There is a tendency to delay policy reviews in government and when it happens, they miss some critical issues because the focus is on the complications of issues that should have been addressed. The cause of delay is usually financial challenges”*. The risk with delays in reviewing policies is that it increases the risk of implementing activities that are addressing outdated problems thereby wasting resources and failing to achieve the improvement of poor youth education attendance. One of the effects of such delays is the implementation of irrelevant curricula. Although the government has responded to the need to revise the curriculum (Malawi Government, 2013), for example, there are still challenges as shown in Appendix A3. Banda (2003), Nudelman (2011) and UNESCO (2004) suggest that issues of policy are problematic in education sectors such as Malawi and Zambia. A critical analysis of the underlying causes for the low education attendance could be addressed by formulating, implementing and reviewing policies. As argued by Matonga (2015), policy implementation flaws undermine progress thereby negatively affecting improvements in the education sector. Based on this discussion, the ESIP provides some hope that when strengthened, hopefully by this study, this could provide necessary guidelines for improving youth education attendance. It is argued in this study that although the ESIP is relatively weak, it is relevant to the process of creating human capital for Malawi.

5.3.4 Poor communication systems

It would seem that teachers in Malawi have challenges accessing information especially in the rural areas as discussed in chapter 2 and 5: *“I have never had a copy of the education policy. I have seen it before with a government official”*. This argument is an indication that knowledge sharing is a problem in the education sector and government excuse that: *“Government has limited funds to print enough copies for all teachers and officials”*, does not help address the problem. Based on the serious levels of corruption in Malawi as argued in chapter 2 and 4, it is difficult to rule out the possibility of corruption being one of the possible causes for failure by government to provide funds to support production of education resources and to communicate effectively with teachers. It is likely that the discussion of corruption is avoided as it involves powerful politicians. This is

why Lamour (2007b) argues that bureaucracy is paradoxical in the sense that the same people who are supposed to fight corruption nurture it.

Based on chapters 1 to 5, it is fair to conclude that:

There appears to be some serious education and youth policy formulation and implementation flaws and the unattended flaws appear to be causing low education attendance in Malawi.

Based on this perceived problem, four out of 21 identified problems have been identified to inform the proposed education strategy discussed in chapter 6.

5.3.5 Justification for the selected themes for proposed education strategy

As discussed in chapter 2, the review of ESIP (2009-13), NESP (2008-17) and NEP (2016), indicates that these policy documents address too numerous issues to manage within a specified period such as five years as is the case with the ESIP. It has been argued that this could be one of the reasons for the dismal achievements of the policies. This study argues that for practical reasons, it would not be possible to address all 21 issues in a policy strategy. Therefore only four issues have been identified for strategy action plan namely: culture, decentralization, pedagogy, policy formulation and implementation.

The selection of the four issues has been guided by:

- Figure 5.1 shows that the four issues are strongly related to the rest of the other identified issues and the assumption is that activities addressing the four issues have the potential ripple effect on the rest of the issues.
- It has emerged that there are many repetitions of activities when all the 21 issues are targeted due to their interrelationships.
- Addressing the four issues would most likely fill the gaps identified in the education and youth policy.
- The four issues relate strongly to the theories underpinning the study.
- The four issues cover the drivers of Malawi education which are political, social, economic, technological, environmental and legal factors as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

This study also argues that not all identified education challenge issues should be addressed in the education strategy as they can be addressed in other development sectors such as health,

agriculture, finance and economic planning. This means that other government sectors ought to take up the other issues. For example, the issue of youth training could be handled in the youth department of the Ministry of Youth Development, overpopulation by the Ministry of Health and the bursaries for girls by the Ministry of Economic Planning, trade exploitation by the Ministry of Trade. It is further argued that Malawi's chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal #4 (SDG) of providing good quality education to all by 2030 rests on more than one ministry.

It is further argued that Malawi's chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal #4 (SDG) of providing good quality education to all by 2030 rests on more than one ministry. The SDG # 4 includes universal primary and secondary education, early childhood development and universal pre-primary education, equal access to technical/vocational and higher education and relevant skills for decent work, gender equality and inclusion, universal youth literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship while the following factors are strategies aimed at facilitating the achievement of the goal: effective learning environments, scholarships and teachers and educators (UNESCO, 2015).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This final chapter presents contributions to the body of knowledge, conclusions, summaries, recommendations, proposed topics for future research, limitation of the study and lessons learnt. Finally, the chapter presents an empirically informed proposed education strategy that has attempted to fill the gaps identified in education and youth policies with the aim of promoting youth education attendance in Malawi. This study has broadened the understanding of the problems surrounding education attendance by harnessing views from a diversity of respondents. The fact that this study has respondents from six languages further broadens the understanding of diverse perspectives on the value of education.

6.1 Contribution to body of knowledge

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge at four levels: The first being the identification of underlying causes for the low youth education attendance and provides detailed discussion of how they play out in affecting the education attendance of the youth in Malawi. The discussions have exposed that some of the education and youth policy rhetoric are not necessarily the main problems but are rather symptoms of the underlying problems. For example, ‘inadequate teachers’ appears to be a policy rhetoric whose main underlying causes are: frustration of teachers due to walking long distances to schools, poor housing, low and delayed salaries and poor training.

The second is the analytical process of identifying the four overarching problems that when addressed will likely affect positively the addressing of the other problems. The analytical process has exposed the strong links that exist between and among the various underlying causes.

The third are recommendations which may need further exploration by government and other education stakeholders before implementation.

The fourth is the formulation of the empirical informed proposed education strategy which has the potential to facilitate the increase in youth education attendance. The application of theories in analysing data and subsequent identification of gaps in education and youth policies mutually reinforce the potential of the strategy to promote education attendance.

6.2 Recommendations

In order to address the complex underlying causes affecting youth education attendance, a pragmatic, multi-dimensional strategy is required and should be implemented. The education sector requires a holistic and consultative approach to policy planning and implementation, effective coordination in undertaking advocacy to maintain political commitment, facilitate policy dialogue and knowledge-sharing, setting standards and monitoring progress towards the education targets.

For effective human capital theory application, improvements should start with the Early Childhood Development (ECD) which provides support to children's well-being and progressive preparation for primary school entry. This should be given attention as it is an important transition. There is need for a strong foundation for children's long-term development, well-being and health as well as building the competencies and skills that enable people to learn throughout life and to earn a livelihood. The Ministry of Education should therefore invest at this level and promote children's attendance by addressing the following areas:

- There is need for review of the current education policy so that it accommodates the complexities of underlying causes for the problem of low education attendance.
- The education policy review should be informed by current evaluation and research studies in order to include current challenges in the education sector.
- A deliberate policy strategic plan that addresses the impact of culture on female education should be formulated and implemented to promote female education. For example, gender equality in education must continue to be relentlessly emphasized with the aim of ensuring that boys and girls experience the same advantages in attending all levels of school and in accessing learning, curricula, academic orientation, credentials and life opportunities.
- While the Malawi education system can be informed by foreign examples of best educational practice, the education policy should prioritise the needs of its people.
- Synchronisation of public policies should be enhanced in order to maximise the benefits of a multi-sector approach in addressing the education problems.
- Policy implementation should be prioritised as policy formulation only has failed to improve the education sector.

- Government should decentralise the management of the education sector in order to improve rural education service delivery that benefits the majority of the population.
- Community opinion leaders such as traditional leaders should be at the centre of education decentralisation management in order to address issues surrounding culture and rural education attendance.
- Teacher motivation should include training and paying teachers' salaries on time.
- Government should consider introducing subsidised secondary school fees for the poor populations.
- The media should take an active role in advocating for improved education services.
- The Malawi CSOs should actively participate in promoting improved education services.
- Confidential reporting mechanisms on female student abuses should be established in universities and schools (complaint and response committees).
- The introduction of rural nursery schools should be a long-term strategy of educating children about the negative impact of some of the cultural practices that prevent education attendance.
- Education as a long term strategy for dealing with corruption.

6.3 Proposed Strategy

The proposed strategy emerging from this study addresses education and youth policy gaps. The strategy is meant to complement the already outlined action plans in the education and youth policy with the aim of improving youth education attendance. It is designed to be a resource for policy makers and education sector advisors. As recommended by David (2011), the competitive advantage of the proposed strategy comes from the rigorous investigation and analysis of the ‘unknown factors’ involving a diversity of respondents so as to minimize creating further gaps in the education policy. Informed by Wheelen and Hunger (1998), this proposed strategy will be subjected to monitoring and evaluating in order to assess its relevance and impact. The strategy has taken into account drivers of the Malawi education as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2.1, views of respondents, identified gaps in the education sector, youth policies and arguments advanced in the theories underpinning this study. The strategy is also guided by knowledge that competing interests, differing views about the influence of facts, values and advocacy as argued by Kilpatrick (2000), can affect this strategy. It is also argued that the details of the proposed

strategy are deliberate so as to provide specific guidance in designing tools for its evaluation. The details of the strategy have therefore taken into consideration issues surrounding challenges in formulating and implementing policies as argued by Ball (2006) and Kilpatrick (2000). This being the case, the formulation of the proposed strategy has been enhanced by theories underpinning the study.

6.3.1 Human capital theory

Based on the arguments in the human capital theory as discussed before, it became apparent that the Malawi government is neglecting some critical elements that would enhance the processes of facilitating the empowerment of youth with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and also increase their chances of improving their livelihood. For example, contrary to the human capital theory, it has emerged from this study that the Malawi government is grossly under investing in the education sector. It would appear that such short-falls are also a result of many other factors such as flaws in internal controls leading to corruption. It has also emerged that the Malawi education system appears to be premised on preparing youth to get employment and appears to neglect the concept of empowerment so that the youth can make informed decisions, and widen their options for livelihood undertakings. While the human capital theory argues that its achievement is dependent also on other factors such as sex, the Malawi education sector pays little attention to issues prohibiting girls from attending education such as culture as discussed below. The gaps identified between theory and practice have been cited in literature and respondents' views as underlying causes for the low youth education attendance. The proposed education strategy has attempted to address these gaps. As discussed in chapter two and five, the human capital theory appeared not sufficient to illuminate all the gaps existing in the management of the education sector in Malawi, hence the additional theories that are viewed as important in closing the educational gaps.

6.3.2 Women's empowerment theory

While the women's empowerment theory argues that educating girls and women is an important step in overcoming poverty which is the bedrock of violations of human rights, including the rights of girls to be educated, the education policy strategy existing educational action plans appear to neglect real cultural practices that prohibit girls from attending education. The women's

empowerment theory exposes real issues on the ground such as abuse of girls in school/university, domestic chores, bullying and other social ills.

6.3.3 Corruption theory

The corruption theory has illuminated flaws in internal controls in the education system that leads to diversion of funds meant to improve the education sector services. Such practices have the potential of undermining the support for the poor youth to attend education, improve the educational infrastructure, and paying salaries for teachers. The theory has also exposed the missed opportunity in the current education policy to view the education system as a long-term strategy for reducing corruption.

6.3.4 Decentralisation theory

In complementing the human capital theory, the decentralization theory has exposed that its practice in Malawi appears to be a government policy imperative as opposed to being a way of understanding political and the economic infrastructure and how it impacts development such as youth education attendance. Some of the values advanced by the theory which are missing in practice are checking corruption and enhancement of democratic governance where for example the community would take part in the management of the education sector.

6.3.5 Post -colonial theory

The post-colonial theory has exposed the rigidity of the independent Malawi education system to move towards the empirical based system. It has illuminated the persistence of failed education strategies and management style adopted from the colonial masters. The theory appears disjointed from the current needs of the country such as a curriculum that resonates with the needs of the Malawi market. The theory also points out the tendency of political rhetoric which is a reminiscent of the colonial system of governance.

6.3.6 Motivation theory

Motivation theory as a complementary theory to human capital theory illuminates the motivation gaps that arise due to sex and social background of Malawian youth to acquire knowledge and skills for their empowerment. The theory has exposed the flaws in the role of parents to ensure that their children are educated. The theory also points out factors that cause teachers not to be able to

provide the education needed for youth education attendance to rise. Examples of the issues arising are; insufficient training for teachers and delayed salaries

6.3.7 Media development

Media development theory enhances the human capital theory by helping to identify gaps in strategies to ensure communication for enhancing education. The theory also exposes the disparity that exists between the communication that the media is providing and activities designed to improve the education sector. The media theory cuts across all the other theories by showing its role in development and how it is applied in the specific theories.

It is fair to conclude that the gaps identified between policy direction, implementation and peoples' expectation regarding the meaning of education needs serious attention. Since the proposed education strategy emerging from this study attempts to respond to the existence of the gaps, a deliberate analysis of factors that would undermine the effectiveness of the strategy has been conducted in Table 6.1 below. Based on the discussion of data in chapter 5, it has become necessary to focus on power, interests and traditions as they seem to have profound implication on the education sector in general and youth education attendance in particular. Determination of the degree of the risks and threats is based on their likelihood to occur as informed by the literature and respondents views.

Table 6.1: Degree of risks and threats to the success of the proposed strategy

Low risks/threats	Medium risks/threats	High risks/threats
Youth deserting education (interest)	Funds (power)	Lack of political will (power and interest)
	Foreign influence (power)	Culture (power and tradition)

6.4 Justification for using log frame approach for proposed strategies

The proposed strategy is presented in the log frame format because the National Education Policy (NEP, 2016) implementation plan is also in log frame format. The argument advanced here is that

it would be easier for government to accept the proposed strategy in the same format than if it were in a different format. There are also advantages with log frames as they indicate objectives of the strategy, stakeholders, means for verification (monitoring and evaluation), inputs and expected outcomes, long and short-term results, and necessary conditions for the strategy to be successful. However, a time line has not been included as the proposed strategy is expected to be implemented within the given government time line for its policy strategies. The strategy impact is expected to be long-term although some activities have the potential of achieving expected results in the short-term.

Tables 6.2 to 6.5 show the logical frameworks for addressing the four overarching issues, namely culture, decentralisation, pedagogy and policy, as justified in section 5.3.5. The log frames present a proposed strategy that responds to all the objectives of the study and provides possible solutions surrounding the family; school; motivation; culture and governance issues raised in the study.

Table 6.2: Log frames for addressing cultural issues

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH EDUCATION ATTENDANCE				
	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objective	1.0 To address culture linked underlying causes for low education attendance.	Number of girls especially from rural areas attending and completing education.	School attendance report. Monitoring and evaluation reports (EMIS). Community education committee reports.	Schools attendance reports/registers are up to date. Community opinion leaders are involved.
Specific objectives	1.1 To engage community opinion leaders at the local council in promoting education attendance.	Stakeholder participating at the local council including local leaders.	District local council reports. School attendance report.	Decentralisation structures in place and effective.
	1.2 To engage rural communities in education attendance sensitization campaigns.	Number of rural youth attending education at all levels.	Monitoring and evaluation reports (EMIS).	Schools update school attendance reports.
	1.3 To develop school-community education committees.	Number of school-community education committees' partnerships developed.	Community education committee reports.	Government support EMIS.
	1.4 To create community dialogue forums to discuss issues surrounding youth education attendance.	Number of active community dialogue forums created and functional.		Community support.

	1.5 To create youth education attendance dialogue forums.	Number of youth dialogue forums created and functional. Number of cultural challenges addressed.		
	1.6 To establish community counselling centres.	Number of functioning centres.		
	1.7 To support school and community counselling centres.	Reports on support.		
Expected results (short to long term)	1.1.1 Reduced teenage pregnancies.	Reduction of girl school dropout due to pregnancy.	School attendance report.	Government support (policy).
	1.1.2 Time for initiations coherent with academic calendars.	Initiation ceremonies conducted within school holidays.	Monitoring and evaluation reports (EMIS).	School and community support.
	1.1.3 Households become conducive for learning.	Households allocate time for school work.	Community education committee reports.	Youth in general and girls in particular are motivated to attend education. Cultural custodians willing to accept change for women's participation in matters of development and having a role in education attendance promotion.
	1.1.4 Night outdoor activities regulated	Youth indoors at night.		
	1.1.5 Increased number of youth especially girls attending education.	Number of youth especially girls attending education. Number of girls and women participating in the promotion of education attendance.		
	1.1.6 Creation of rural female role models forums.			
	1.1.7 Women's empowerment.			

	1.1.8 Rural girls getting equal opportunities for education attendance.	Number of women acquiring skills needed in the job market.		
	1.1.9 Reduced number of loitering youth.	Number of youth active in development programmes.		
	1.1.10 Youth getting skills to participate in national development.	Number of youth attending education.		
	1.1.11 Communities prioritise girls' education.	Number of girls attending education.		
	1.1.12 Creation of educated mothers that will motivate their daughters to attend education.	Number of girls completing high school education.		
	1.1.13 Traditional leaders become agents for the promotion of youth education.	Number of traditional leaders actively promoting youth education.		
	1.1.14 Increase in community participation in education attendance promotion.	Number of activities that distract school attendance.		
	1.1.15 Community and schools partnership enhanced.	Number of functional school committees.		
	1.1.16 Reduced school drop outs.	Number of school dropouts.		
	1.1.17 Parents provide time for their children to do school work.	Time allocated for school work at home.		

	1.1.18 Parents motivate their children to attend education.	Support given for youth education attendance.		
	1.1.19 Reduced urbanisation.	Number of people working in rural areas.		
	1.1.20 Acts of bullying reduced.	Number of youth in school. Number of vulnerable youth attending school.		
	1.1.21 Youth are attentive in class.	Number of youth actively participating in class.		
	1.1.22 Acts of sexual abuses happening at night outdoor activities reduced.	Number of reported sexual abuses.		
Activities	1.1.1.1 Mobilising and sensitising parents/guardians/teachers and community opinion leaders on their roles in promoting youth education attendance.	Means: Local development fund. Meeting facility. Retired teachers, public and private officers. Time allocation.	What are the sources of information on action progress? School, community and government reports.	Preconditions Community opinion leaders support the programme. Decentralisation is effective.
	1.1.1.2 Formation of community education committees that includes women.			
	1.1.1.3 Planning and monitoring community education attendance youth motivation talks.			
	1.1.1.4 Report writing.			

1.1.1.5 Formulation of community education attendance promotion by laws/guidelines.			
1.1.1.6 Attending district council education meetings.			
1.1.1.7 Advocating for the support of improved rural education.			
1.1.1.8 Creating counselling centres for the support of youth (orphans) by retired public and private officers.			
1.1.1.9 Provision of condoms to reduce risks of contracting diseases or being pregnant as a consequence of cultural sexual rituals. 1.1.1.10 Discussion of impact of Western cultures on education. 1.1.1.11 Use of folk tales to sensitise children about the value of education.			

Table 6.3: Log frames for decentralization strictures

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH EDUCATION ATTENDANCE				
	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objectives	2.0 To strengthen decentralised structures for effective management of the education sector.	Functioning and effective local councils.	Local council management report. Local council financial reports. Parliamentary local authority and development committee. EMIS	Central government support full decentralisation.
Specific objective	2.1 To empower local councils to attain administrative and financial autonomy.	Local councils have adequate financial resources. Local councils have adequate and qualified human resources.	Bank statements Recruitment and training of staff reports. EMIS Community education committee reports.	Central government support full decentralisation Parliament provides effective oversight functions over decentralisation. Community support.
	2.2 To build the capacity of local councils to manage decentralisation structures that includes trade. 2.3 To sensitise community members about their roles in the decentralisation structures to manage education sector. 2.4 To provide local councils with qualified staff and resources. 2.5 To establish robust and transparent financial systems.	Local councils have required qualified personnel. Number of functional local education management committees.		

Expected results	2.1.1 Functional and effective education systems under local councils.	Increased education attendance. Improved education facilities.	EMIS Parliamentary local authority and development committee. Local council education committee reports.	Central government support full decentralisation. Parliament provides oversight functions over decentralisation. Community support.
	2.1.2 Corruption checked.	Improved and consistent education services.		
	2.1.3 Qualified teaching staff recruited and retained.	Improved student/teacher ratio. Improved teacher welfare. Improved education attendance		
	2.1.4 Community opinion leaders fully involved in the management of education.	Number of active community leaders. Number of rural youth attending education.		
	2.1.5 Improved rural youth education attendance and performance.	Number of rural youth including girls attaining tertiary education. Number of rural educated models.		
Activities	2.1.1.1 Lobbying with central government for local council financial and administrative autonomy. 2.1.1.2 Local education management strategy development.	Means: Resources for meetings (funds and infrastructure).	EMIS Parliamentary local authority and development committee.	Central government support full decentralisation Parliament provides effective oversight

	<p>2.1.1.3 Capacity building of human capital (training and workshops).</p> <p>2.1.1.4 Sensitisation of community members on their new roles in promoting education attendance.</p> <p>2.1.1.5 Regular audits.</p>	Number of skilled personnel in local councils.	Local council education committee reports.	<p>functions over decentralisation.</p> <p>Community support.</p>
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Table 6.4: Log frames for pedagogy

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH EDUCATION ATTENDANCE				
	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objective	3.0 To improve teaching and learning conditions (pedagogy)	Improved class attendance, participation and retention of learners. Improved education management. Improved teacher training and welfare.	EMIS School reports.	Government provides support. Community participation.
Specific objectives	3.1 To improve teacher training and welfare (work conditions).	Improved teacher housing and salary pay dates. Improved promotion criteria for teachers.		
	3.2 To improve learning and accommodation conditions in schools and universities.	Improved class attendance and participation. Improved hostel accommodation for female university students.		
	3.3 To review education curriculum to resonate with needs of people.	Increase in self-employed professions. Increased intake of interns by companies. Increased qualification for employability.		

	3.4 To ensure community participation in school management.	Improved youth education attendance. Improved rural girl education attendance.		
	3.5 To formalise and support mechanisms for reporting abuses such as bullying.	Cases of abuse reported. Reduction in number of abused youth.		
	3.6 To enforce policy on school inspections.	Improved pedagogy. Increased education attendance Increased number of passing rates.		
Expected results	3.1.1 Improved standard of teacher training.	Reduction on distraction of academic calendar. Reduced teacher turn over. Improved professionalism of teachers. Reduced teacher/student ratio.	EMIS School reports Monitoring and evaluation.	Government provides support. Community participation.
	3.1.2 Improved welfare of teachers.	Improved pedagogy. Improved housing and salary pay dates.		
	3.1.3 Improved teaching/learning infrastructure and resources.	Increased youth education attendance. Improved education attendance. Improved pass rate.		

	3.1.4 Improved education curriculum (responds to needs such as fighting corruption)	Increased potential for employability. Increased interest in fighting corruption among youth in school.		
	3.1.5 Increased youth attendance in education.	Number of youth attending primary, secondary, college and university education.		
	3.1.6 Improved education attendance of the disabled.	Number of disabled students attending and completing primary, secondary, college and university education.		
	3.1.7 Support for periodic policy reviews and evaluations and education research.			
Activities	3.1.1.1. Revision of teacher training programme. 3.3.2 Planning and conducting school inspections. 3.1.1.2 Use of durable tents for classrooms. 3.1.1.3 Setting up school and community counselling centres. 3.1.1.4 Introduce subsidised secondary school fees for the rural poor. 3.1.1.5 Recruit some of the retired teachers for areas with critical shortage of qualified teachers.	Means: Funds. Qualified personnel. Time allocation.	EMIS School reports Monitoring and evaluation.	Government provides support. Community participation

	<p>3.1.1.6 Planning and conducting community education promotion activities.</p> <p>3.1.1.7 Punishing abusive teachers/lecturers.</p> <p>3.1.1.8 Introduce rural nursery schools.</p> <p>3.1.1.9 Establish confidential abuse reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>3.1.1.10 Conduct operation research.</p> <p>3.1.1.11 Construct infrastructure that is user friendly for pupils/students and teachers with disability.</p> <p>3.1.1.12 Introduce robust artisan entrepreneurship programmes.</p>			
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Table 6.5: Log frames for education policy strategy

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH EDUCATION ATTENDANCE				
	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objective	4. 0 To strengthen the education sector implementation plan to respond to local education needs.	Relevance of the education sector implementation plan to the local education needs.	EMIS, research, monitoring and evaluations.	Government, CSOs and the media take part. Implementation of policy decentralised.
Specific objective	4.1 To ensure the formulation of research based education policy.	Relevance of policy to local needs.	EMIS, research, monitoring and evaluations.	Government willingness.

	<p>4.2 To lobby for synchronisation of public policies.</p> <p>4.3 To enforce policy implementation.</p> <p>4.4 Increased funding for rural girl education.</p>	Consistency in implementing policy action plans.		Commitment of policy users.
Expected results	4.1.1 Education policy that responds to local education needs.	Education policy that addresses education needs.	EMIS, research, monitoring and evaluations.	Government willingness. Commitment of policy users.
	4.1.2 Improved and consistent implementation of education and youth policies.	<p>Number of youth education programmes planned and accomplished.</p> <p>Policy adherence.</p>		
	4.1.3 Improved education services.	Increased youth attending education at primary, secondary, college and university levels.		
	4.1.4 Policy documents are available in hard copies in rural education institutions.	<p>Uniformity in education service delivery.</p> <p>Improved quality of education services in the rural areas.</p> <p>Number of policy copies available in education institutions.</p>		

	4.1.5 Review of policy given priority.	Updated policies.		
	4.1.6 Increased investments in other tertiary education services (apprentice training).	Quota system is abolished. Increased skilled human capital.		
	4.1.7 High quality of human capital from public universities and training colleges. 4.1.8 Increased budget allocation to the education sector.	Increase youth population attaining and completing tertiary education.		
Activities	4.1.1.1 Fund education research. 4.1.1.2 Monitoring and evaluations of policy strategy action plans. 4.1.1.3 Printing and distribution of policy copies to education institutions. 4.1.1.4 Policy reviews/synchronisation. 4.1.1.5 Introduction of pregnancy prevention methods among youth (condom access). 4.1.1.6 Review foreign policies on Malawi education system. 4.1.1.7 Engage rural girls in discussing their educational challenges. 4.1.1.8 Strengthen internal controls, transparency and accountability.	Means: Funds, researchers, facilitators of debates, media outlets.	EMIS, research, monitoring and evaluations.	Government willingness. Commitment of policy users. Culture and religion support the intervention.

6.5 Proposed topics for future research

This research study has led to the identification of other important issues requiring further investigations as indicated below:

- An analysis of processes in formulating education policy targets: challenges and strategies. The justification for the study is that there has not been much background information supporting the targets in the policy. Some targets look over-ambitious: for example, the ESIP aimed to attain a 100% enrolment rate by 2015 which was not achieved as evidenced in section 2.2.1.1.
- An investigation of the cost–value analysis of the free primary school education programme, as this study has established that the implementation of FPE has brought numerous negative impacts to the education sector.
- An investigation into the impact of maternity leave on the employability of women in both public and private sectors, as raised in section 4.1.6.4.
- An assessment of the correlation between the quota system for selecting students to public universities and students' withdrawal or failure rate. This study has established that some students that are withdrawn from public universities are withdrawn due to the quota system selection criteria, as presented in section 4.2.2.
- An assessment of HIV/AIDS impact on the education sector: missed opportunities to improve quality of education. The education sector needs its own unique approach to deal with HIV/AIDS as it is the hub for the creation of human capital and national development, as discussed in section 2.2.1.1 and section 4.1.1.6.
- An assessment of psychological support and care for the youth: challenges and strategies. This study has established that mental health is becoming a new threat to education attendance among the youth. One of the predisposing factors is absence of counselling services, as argued in section 4.2.1.
- An investigation into the effects of rural nursery schools as a strategy to address negative effects of culture on schooling. This study has established that culture and attitudes toward education are entrenched among Malawi youth from early childhood.

6.6 Limitations of the study

- Stephen (2009), Given (2008) and Kumar (2005) argue that qualitative research, like this study, generally depends on the availability and willingness of people to give information. Although government officials may have had some very useful data to substantiate or refute certain claims, such as loss of revenue (which might have been used to provide educational resources) through corruption, the researcher could not force them to provide the necessary information. The information was deemed by government officials to be too sensitive to release. This means that claims of corruption by for example, parents and teachers as impacting on education have had to be necessarily tentative.
- Despite informing prospective respondents to the contrary it is acknowledged that based on the position of the researcher in society, some respondents may have participated in the study with the expectation that the researcher would provide solutions to their problems. That said, it is possible to assert that respondents gave their responses freely as none received direct help from the researcher in exchange for the information they provided.
- Although the study sample is sufficient for this study, it is relatively small compared to the population that the study aims to represent and benefit. Therefore the study results cannot be generalized. That said, it is not an expectation of qualitative research that findings are generalised.
- The methodology chapter explored issues of researcher bias and how attempts were made to limit researcher bias. However, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher's motivation to build human capital to participate in national development as supported by government priorities (NESP, 2008–17) had some influence on the researcher's choice of questions used in collecting data in this study. As a consequence, it is possible that some equally important issues may not have been captured as a result of this bias.

- Although this study has comprehensively investigated underlying causes for low youth education attendance, the scope of the study could not allow for the further exploration of other equally important emerging factors.
- This study was conducted during a specific period of time. This means that there could be other critical elements which have not been captured during the time of the study. Therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that all the critical components needed for the construction of the strategy to improve youth education attendance have been included. Nevertheless, the results of this study are comprehensive enough to inform policy strategy formulation.

Data on abandoned education programmes due to change of government and politics were not quantified and therefore, it was not possible to assess the gravity of the problem, as argued in section 4.1.5.1.

Despite these limitations, the outcome of the study is empirical and can sufficiently inform the education sector implementation plan.

6.7 Strengths of the study

This study has some unique strengths as outlined below:

- The inclusion of a diverse range of respondents especially in the rural areas, as rural respondents would not normally be given a voice.
- The insights gained particularly in relation to the education of girls in rural communities from various cultural perspectives.
- The identification of the complex interrelationship of the factors affecting youth education attendance.
- The provision of empirical evidence for policy formation that includes cultural issues where previously this did not exist.
- The ability to communicate in various local languages by the researcher facilitated the degree of respondent participation and the encouraged use of the respondents' local languages facilitated diverse cultural expressions, which in turn encouraged respondent inclusion in the study.

- The interface communication with respondents made it possible to dig deeper into issues based on the direction of the discussion.

6.8 Lessons from the study

The research study, specifically chapter 3, has provided some valuable lessons for similar future studies.

- The use of vernacular languages by respondents provided deep insights into the challenges surrounding the education system. It was possible to discuss culture and education in the context of tribal groups.
- This study has shown that while the use of vernacular languages facilitated respondent discussion using local languages to enhance learning is not ideal for Malawi as it would be too expensive to print books in various languages.
- Rural respondents seemed more comfortable with group interviews than one-to-one interviews.
- The involvement of women in the study led to an in-depth understanding of their views about cultural issues which impact negatively on their education attendance.
- Conducting research in the respondents' natural environment proved valuable as respondents appeared comfortable to participate in the study.
- Researcher knowledge and expertise in the local languages used by respondents helped to avoid a translator's opinion becoming part of the data collection and biasing the analysis, and subsequent interpretations and conclusions derived from the study.

6.9 Summary

According to the literature and respondents' views, it would seem that Malawi is striving hard to improve the education sector. However, this study has established that while there has been some initiatives to facilitate the increase of youth attending education, these initiatives appear to ignore the underlying causes for youth non-attendance. It is possible that some of the underlying causes such as traditional beliefs, sexual rituals, power abuse and weak transparency and accountability systems may have been ignored in the education policy due to their sensitivities and complexities. Another challenge has to do with policy; the effects of the education policy reforms under the different political regimes on education attendance such as the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy in 1994 as discussed in chapter 2, has contributed to an increase in access to primary education at the dawn of the multiparty regime. The increase in school enrolment has also worsened the teacher pupil ratio thereby deteriorating the quality of education available as argued in the policy strategy action plan (ESIP, 2009-13). Consequently, the number of students who repeat their student year steadily increased and more students dropped out of school. The policy has also failed in the area of clarity as regards the meaning of Free Primary Education as it gives the impression that 'all' primary education needs would be free and yet pupils are required to buy notebooks for example. The study has also established that the education system in Malawi continues to be influenced by foreign economic powers, thereby creating problems such as poor quality education emanating from FPE. There are also serious problems associated with policy implementation leading to delay or ignoring strategic action plans intended to address the problem of education attendance as argued in section 4.3.

The education and youth policy strategies also affect the equity aspect in the sense that despite several efforts by the government at closing the gender enrolment disparity, female enrolment still remains a challenge especially in senior classes of primary school; and the gender gap progressively widens into secondary and tertiary education. Overall, urban residents have more access to education opportunities than their rural counterparts. Children with special educational needs are also not fully integrated into the education system either due to lack of appropriate facilities or qualified teachers. Furthermore, the quota system in the public universities although called equitable access policy to tertiary education, is not all that equal. Students who are in well-resourced secondary schools compete on equal terms with those in CDSSs and night schools which are poorly resourced. It has also emerged from the study that there are serious gaps in the education policy that make it difficult to address the

entrenched issues affecting education attendance. However, this study has attempted to fill the gaps identified through the proposed education strategy.

6.10 Concluding remarks

From the human capital theory point of view and arguments advanced in chapter 4, section 4.3.6.6.2, the study concludes that failure to improve education attendance for the youth poses high developmental challenges as adults with poor literacy skills face multiple sources of disadvantages. They are more likely to face challenges in their lives and those who are employed receive lower wages. They may find it difficult to make use of opportunities in society and unable to exercise their rights. They are also more likely to be in poor health and unable to enjoy their rights and freedoms. The uneducated youth are more likely to become a public nuisance as they indulge in illegal and unethical errands. A combination of these factors lead the researcher to conclude that there is a need for the implementation of a more integrated educational strategy than narrow specific and isolated action plans as has been the case in previous and current education policy implementation. Based on the findings in this study, it is fair to conclude that Malawi the education's system needs strategic repositioning if the youth are to be empowered through education and training.

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APPENDIX A

Evidence of challenges in education sector

Appendix A1: Teachers allowances (24/10/2014)

Appendix A2: Challenges in public universities (3-9/01/2015)

Malawi News / National / January 3-9, 2015/ 5

Crisis haunts public universities

by Archibald Kasakura

Politics, mismanagement and deplorable behaviour by students are some of the reasons that are derailing public university education in the country.

The public universities have reputation of frequent closures that affect the academic calendar.

Students and lecturers from some of the affected universities talked of their worries which include disturbance of the academic calendar and swelling of costs.

At the moment, about 1,000 government sponsored students from Mzuzu University have been asked to re-apply after they were suspended before sitting for end of semester examinations. The students went on strike in protest against low allowances.

Just a few weeks ago, classes were suspended at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi (Unima), because of a strike by support staff.

Ministry of Education through its spokesperson Alfred Ndovi acknowledged the problems facing the public universities.

"The problem is that as a ministry our hands are tied since most of the challenges being faced by these universities are supposed to be handled by management and as a ministry we only provide guidance," he said.

In the case of Mzuni, the government sponsored students were pressing management to give them K40, 000 instead of the usual K25, 000 allowances.

This misunderstanding triggered boycotting of classes and riots by students before they manhandled the Vice Chancellor.

According to Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) Executive Director, Benedicto Kondowe, the strikes signify a bigger problem that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

"First, management has been slow to respond to signs of crisis. In addition, necessary reforms to revitalise our universities are being resisted by management and government at large," he said.

He also cited the stalling of the review of the University of Malawi Act as one reason that is bringing tertiary education into crisis.

Parliament recommended that the revised Act be reviewed in 2011/2012 but since then no further steps have been taken by government.

"Secondly, authorities have allowed politics to ruin our public universities where even straight forward issues have been politicised. Also our public universities lack participatory decision making process, including autonomy to professionally discharge the goal of higher education.

"These will continue as such until the entire university system is completely disintegrated or until such a time that those who are supposed to act realise the scale of harm they will have caused to higher education," said Kondowe.

Some have questioned the rationale of government charging each student fees amounting to K55, 000 per year while at the same time giving each student an upkeep allowance of K40, 000 every month beside K30, 000 that each government-sponsored student gets every semester as stationery allowance.

Currently, the sponsored students want a hike of the upkeep allowance to K65, 000 and the stationery allowance to P15, 000.

However, Ndovi said some of the issues are beyond the ministry's powers and must be handled by respective universities or colleges.

"The Mzuni issue is being dealt by management as such the ministry cannot intervene. Management makes these decisions about allowances according to their budgets. The Chancellor College case is being handled by the council. But I must say that as a ministry we emphasise on quality hence we order the closures whenever some services are being affected," he said.

Ndovi also confirmed that the fees structure in public universities is contributing to the problems.

"Sometimes students feel that they are gaining more by paying less fees and being given more by government in return. It would have been a different case if the students were paying more to see the importance of concentrating on their studies. We are working on a long term plan to deal with these issues," Ndovi said.

For the past years, Malawi's public universities have been the most consistently closed tertiary institutions in Southern Africa.

Appendix A3: Education curriculum (30/11/2014)

NATION on Sunday
NOVEMBER 30 2014

OPINION & ANALYSIS 7

New curriculum: another education disaster

ON THE FRONTLINE

WITH EPHRAIM NYONDO



Sometime early 2000, government, through the Ministry of Education, destroyed the steam of the content-rich Physical Science by introducing a watered-down subject called Science and Technology.

I just can't figure out why government made that decision. But I can confess to be one of its casualties.

In 2003, while in Form Four—that should be the third week of the first term—I moved from Robert Laws Secondary School in Mzimba to Chimaliro Private Secondary School in Mzuzu.

To my utmost baffle, when I first stepped into class at Chimaliro, there was hardly a scribble of Physical Science on the timetable. The reason? The school, after government's decision, opted for Science and Technology.

The result was tragic: all students were systematically forced to drop Physical Science for Science and Technology.

Fresh from Robert Laws where Physical Science was a key subject and one of my favourites, I tried to reason with teachers at Chimaliro to come to my rescue.

I could hardly think of having a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) without Physical Science, so I asked the Science and Technology teacher to help me just with textbooks—if any. He came out reluctant. In fact, he advised I concentrate on Science and Technology. His argument was that the school did not even have a laboratory.

It took me time to come to terms with the reality of letting Physical Science go. I gave up and today, here I am without the subject on my MSCE. Because of that, I failed to apply for my dream course, Irrigation Engineering because, during entrance university examinations, we were heavily warned against applying for science courses if we do not have Physical Science.

In fact, one lecturer from the then Bunda College of Agriculture bluntly told us that University of Malawi (Unima) did not recognise Science and Technology as a science subject.

Consequently—though I don't regret—I ended up in the arts at Chancellor College.

Surprisingly, just two years after my MSCE in 2003, Science and Technology was scrapped from secondary schools.

Today, all I have are painful questions. Why, in the first place, did government introduce the subject? Was it really sure of what it wanted to achieve?

Frankly speaking, the gesture of introducing a subject into the school system and scrap it off a few years later speaks volume of something terribly wrong with the way our education system is managed.

Ideally, I expect our education system to be soberly managed by a cautious and thoughtful ministry, which understands the delicate balance between theory and practice before taking new interventions to classrooms.

But the Science and Technology experience reveals a thoughtful, but myopic ministry, quick to develop and implement rather worthwhile innovations without due regard to conditions of those being targeted.

I thought the tragedy of Science and Technology could have been our moment of truth—a time to understand that top-down management of education is a quick invitation to failure.

Well, wiser ones were indeed wise when they declared the only lesson we learn from history is that humans do not learn from it.

In 2006, government, again after tense deliberation with donors, drew up a Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform (PCAR) and, in a flash, threw it to jam-packed classrooms for helpless teachers to implement. All PCAR reviews I have read stops at calling it a failure.

But when PCAR or Science and Technology fails, what happens to pupils and students? Are they not the ultimate failures?

I am sure you read last weeks' story in Nation on Sunday about how government's own research revealed the scaring scope of how Free Primary Education (FPE) has failed our children and future of the country.

Imagine FPE increasing Standard One enrolment to one million per year, but the number of those staying the course to secondary school remains static at 60 000 per year. What, fellow Malawians is happening to the 940 000? Where do they end up?

Frankly speaking, the failure of Science and Technology; PCAR and FPE do not spring from their underlying philosophy. ■

Feedback: efnyondo@gmail.com

Appendix A4: Corruption in the education sector (7/11/2014)



Parents paying for school maintenance in Rumphu

● Over K100m needed to maintain schools

BY EDITH GONDWE

Parents whose pupils are learning at Bumba CCAP model primary school in Rumphu are coughing up to K500 every term for the maintenance of the school just because of the several challenges it is facing.

The development has since been labelled as uncalled for by one of the education activists in the country, Benedicto Kondowe of the Civil Society Education Coalition (Csec).

Bumba Parents/Teachers Association (PTA) chair, Daniel Mughogho, revealed the development in an interview Wednesday as he narrated a host of challenges the school is facing in providing the desired quality education.

"The school is currently facing enormous challenges which forced parents to intervene. Up to 17 classes are conducted under trees, a development which makes many children drop out of school," said Mughogho.

"The school has 1,476 pupils of whom 874 pupils learn in open air classes and 602 attend classes under roofed rooms."

He said the school has 40 teachers but with just

five teachers' houses, a development that sees most of the teachers stay in rented houses far away from the school, adding that when it rains, particularly in the morning, the teachers wait for the rain to stop before proceeding to teach.

The school had 76 desks against the 1,476 student enrolment before TNM donated 50 desks.

Mughogho said parents conduct activities like mock weddings to raise money for the school, adding that they agreed to pay K500 for each pupil every term to help with moulding of bricks to construct more school blocks and buy other needs like chalk.

"Pupils learning under trees is something really improper because weather conditions in Rumphu are usually bad. Sometimes lessons are disturbed because of weather conditions," he added.

Communities have since connected water and electricity at the school using their initiatives and constructed classroom blocks at the school, among others.

Rumphu District Education Manager (Dem) Lonick Kamisa said the school has a lot of challenges which need to be



OPEN AIR — Girls making the floor of their 'class' after lessons at Bumba — Picture by Karen Msiiska

addressed.

"This is not the only school that is experiencing challenges in Rumphu. We have many schools which are in bad condition and dilapidated," said Kamisa.

He said the district has 186 primary schools of which 95 need maintenance, adding that resources have always been a challenge.

"We used to receive K9million per year for all the schools in the district

which was not enough and the money was later reduced to K4million which was just too little to cater for all schools in the whole district.

"There are many schools which are supposed to be renovated. We need more than K100million to ably revamp most of the schools."

He said the situation is worsened by the fact that primary schools in urban areas do not benefit from the Local Development

Fund (LDF) because it is assumed that they have less challenges.

But Kondowe said there is a lot government and other stakeholders need to do to provide quality education in the country.

"It is hard to understand that up to now there are many pupils learning under the trees across the country. We need government to act not just making promises," he said.

Appendix A6: Poor learning infrastructure (21/04/2015)

Mpingwe pupils learning in 'toilet'

TEMWA MHONE
CORRESPONDENT

Standard Six pupils at Mpingwe Primary School in Blantyre are learning in an out-of-use toilet due to shortage of classrooms at the institution.

The school has 31 teachers against 3 688 pupils using 17 classrooms, including the out-of-use toilet.

In an interview on March 18 2015, the school's head teacher, Fanny Geyageya, said they asked United Nations Childrens Fund (Unicef) to turn the sanitary facility into a classroom to mitigate shortage of classrooms.

Said Geyageya: "In 2012, Unicef came here to renovate classroom blocks. Their project was to paint and roof existing blocks but we reasoned with them to turn the out-of-use toilet into a classroom."

She said Mpingwe is the only underdeveloped primary school in Blantyre urban education district. She also reported that there are numerous break-ins and theft at the school as it has no perimeter fence.

She said: "Railways Company

handed over the current infrastructure to government in 1950s and no additional school blocks have been built since then.

"Schools in Bangwe area like [Chisombezi, Namatapa, Bangwe Catholic, CCAP and Naizi] which were constructed after Mpingwe, have perimeter fences, teachers houses, water supply, staff rooms and additional school blocks built over the years but we have none."

Communities around the school have moulded bricks for school

infrastructure development awaiting well-wishers to assist with construction of houses and classroom blocks.

Stanley Banda, Mzedi-Mpingwe Ward councillor, who attended Mpingwe Primary School, said problems at the school are there for all to see.

Said Banda: "It is obvious upon arrival at this once mighty school that it lacks infrastructure. I am therefore appealing to the school's alumni to come forward. ■



The former toilet turned into classroom

PHOTOGRAPH: TEMWA MHONE

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BOOK CRISIS HITS SEC. SCHOOLS

THE NATION

EXCLUSIVE

- Govt postpones new curriculum
- No old textbooks in shops


LUCKY MKANDAWIRE, STAFF REPORTER

Confusion has hit the education sector following government's eleventh-hour decision to defer implementation of a new secondary school curriculum, *The Nation* can reveal.


Implementation of the new curriculum was supposed to roll out at the start of the current academic year, but government postponed it with just a week left before classes opened.

Government—through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Malawi Institute

» PAGE 2



Led publishers' delegation for talks with ministry: Msadala



Sharra: There was need for continuous consultations

Appendix A8: Teaching boycotts (4/02/2015)



Appendix A9: Teaching boycotts (18/05/2015)

THE DAILY TIMES, Monday, May 18, 2015

Teachers suspend classes over unpaid leave grants

BY MOSES CHITSULO

ABOUT 10,000 pupils in 12 schools that fall under Chisawani Zone in Thyolo have not been attending classes since Monday after their teachers resorted to withdrawing labour over unpaid leave grants.

The National Local Government Finance Committee already disbursed the money for the leave grants to all district councils more than a month ago and teachers in other areas received their leave grants together with their last month's salaries.

In total, there are about 270 teachers who have withdrawn labour and they are expected to receive K48, 000 each.

The teachers, who on Monday presented a petition to the office of District Education Manager (Dem) have since vowed they will only go back to class after receiving their leave grants for the past academic years.

Teachers of other zones in the district including Nansato, Goliatu and Khonjeni are also in the same situation and have since threatened to join their Chisawani colleagues today.

It is also reported that teachers



NDOVI—The teachers will receive their leave grants

in some of the 16 education zones in the district received less than the expected K48, 000.

One of the striking teachers, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals, said when Teachers Union of Malawi (Turn) leaders within the zone presented the grievances, the district education officials used threats instead of addressing their concerns.

"We know that the money is already at the district council and it is surprising that they are failing to release what belongs to us. When our representatives went to meet officials at the district education office they were just told to wait and were warned that they will be transferred from their current schools if they

continue fighting for the money.

"But we have made up our mind and we will start teaching after getting our leave grants. We are not children to be intimidated anyhow. And tomorrow [today], aggrieved fellow teachers from other zones will be joining us," he said.

In an interview yesterday, Acting Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Education, Manfred Ndovi, said the ministry is aware that some teachers in four zones in Thyolo are yet to get their leave grants.

Ndovi said, according to the reports that the ministry received, the problem is a result of some 'issues' between the council and Dem office.

"Yes we are aware of that problem. As we said the money was already released to the districts and the teachers received. However, for Thyolo, some teachers in about four zones are yet to receive their leave grants. The district education office could not access the money from the district council because there were some issues between them. But those issues have been sorted out and those teachers are expected to receive their money anytime from today. Possibly, next week," Ndovi said.

14000 kgs of illegal Medicines seized

BY MACDONALD THOM

Appendix A10: School closure (9/10/2014)

BRIEF

Ntcheu Secondary School to reopen January 5

Ntcheu Secondary School is set to reopen on January 5 2015, more than three months after it was indefinitely closed following disturbances at the institution. The school was closed on September 27 after students rioted and vandalised school property worth K7.5 million. According to a letter from the school's management signed by head teacher Alexander Muhanya, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has directed the reopening of the school. But the letter, addressed to all parents and guardians of students at the school, says the ministry has directed that all students who have been excluded should not report for classes. Each student in Forms Two, Three and Four are expected to bring K20 000 for repairs of the vandalised assets. They will also pay K24 750 as school fees for the second term.—MALAWI NEWS AGENCY

Appendix A11: Challenges of the disabled in attending education (9/10/2014)

Disabled children missing out on education

FATSANI GUNYA
STAFF REPORTER

Mercy Mwale has no hope for her eight-year-old disabled child who has been confined to her house at Khombedza in Salima.

"I feel like I am being punished for my son's disability. Seeing my son failing to access education because of his disability makes me sad. Able-bodied children go to school, but my son just stays at home," laments 36-year-old Mwale.

Like many developing countries, Malawi's education for children with disabilities is still skewed, with many disabled children like Mwale's son having little or no access to formal education.

A 2014 Global Campaign for Education's (GCE) report notes that a Malawian child with disability is twice as likely to have never attended school as a child without a disability. Girls with disabilities are worse.

"In Malawi, one study showed that more girls with disabilities have never attended school compared to boys with disabilities," reads the GCE report, noting this translates into lower literacy rates for youths and adults in the long run.

In a communiqué presented to government by children with disabilities at Kaliyeka Primary School in Lilongwe during this year's commemoration of



Girls with disabilities such as these do not usually go far with education

children asked government to address lack of disability-friendly environment in the country's primary schools.

"Remember that disability is not inability. Due to lack of support, a lot of challenges affect our learning process. We don't have a resource room for our pullout education Braille materials; a must for learners with visual impairment. We also lack mirrors and speech rooms for learners who access sign language due to hearing impairment.

"Also, some of the students with intellectual disabilities do not have

friendly buildings starting from classrooms to the toilets for those that are physically challenged," reads the communiqué in part.

Kaliyeka is one of the few primary schools implementing inclusive education systems in the country to ensure both learners with disabilities and those without disabilities access basic education.

The school's head teacher, Heldala Mpokosela, says the school has few teachers specialised in special needs education who tirelessly work to ensure children with disabilities complete

pupils have been selected to national secondary schools in the past two years.

"Currently, we have 74 pupils with disabilities at this school, but we face many challenges to successfully teach," says Mpokosela.

Malawi has about 1 000 trained special needs teachers against the demand of about 12 000 teachers.

Civil Society Education Coalition (Csec) vice-chairperson Julie Juma says while government has a critical role to play in addressing the challenges faced by children with disabilities in accessing education, parents of the

including establishment of special needs education units in teacher training colleges as a short-term measure while embarking on the construction of the Special Needs Education Institute," says Fabiano.

He says the Ministry of Education has also established a Directorate of Special Needs Education to ensure that schools provide an environment where learners with special needs can access education without hindrances, adding government is also ensuring that all new classroom blocks are constructed with disability-friendly designs.

"However, it is no secret that government alone cannot manage to address this huge challenge facing the education of children with disabilities. I would, therefore, like to call upon all key stakeholders to continue working together to make the right to education for these children a reality," says Fabiano.

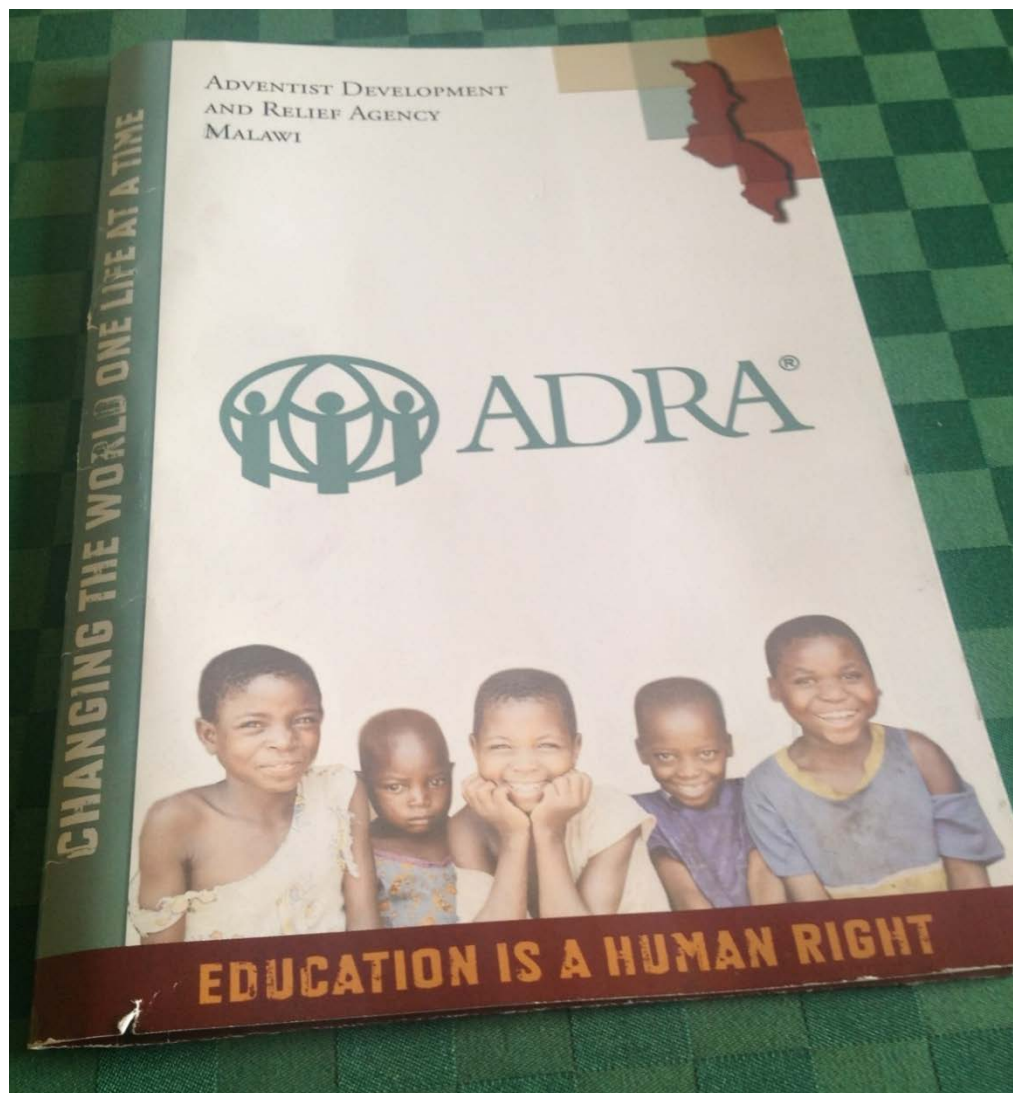
Csec and its partners recently implemented various activities at the national and district level to sensitise communities to the right to education for children with disabilities.

Meanwhile, children with disabilities, especially those living in rural areas like Mwale's son would continue to helplessly admire their peers going to school if efforts to change the status of affairs would not be expedited.

According to Csec, unless these challenges are addressed, the standards of inclusive education in Malawi will

PHOTOGRAPH: NATION LIBRARY

Appendix A12 and 13: Poster for education attendance promotion and girl education attendance project contractual agreement (2013)



ADRA Denmark – “Grant recipient”

Grant allocation for DI 2013 “When mother is a child”

Grant number:	DI 2013
Name of action:	“When mother is a child”
Place of action:	Malawi
Purpose of action:	Reduced teenage pregnancies and improved health and socio economic status of teenage mothers and their children in Mulanje district of Southern Malawi by 2016.

Grant allocation for 2014-2016	Estimated 1.900.000 DKK
*The actual figure is to be determined by the amount ADRA Denmark will receive from the donors (Danmarksindsamlingen 2013)	

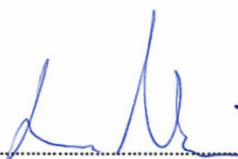
	ADRA Denmark	Grant recipient: ADRA Malawi
Address	Concordiavej 16	P.O. Box 951
Postal code and city	2850 Nærum	Blantyre
Email:	launie@adra.dk	adramalawi.cd@gmail.com
Phone:	+45 45 58 77 00	+265 (0)182 0016 +265 (0)996 352 200

Subscribers to this contract accept the conditions and administrative guidelines in the General Agreement including audit guidelines.


Annexes included in this contract are:

- Program/project document
- LFA
- Detailed budget
- Audit requirements

For ADRA DK: Title, name, signature, date:

Programme Coordinator Laura Nielsen  23/06/14

For Grant recipient: Title, name, signature:

COUNTRY DIRECTOR CLAUDIO Sandoval  20/06/14

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following questions focus on the causes and underlying causes of low youth education attendance.

What do you think are the causes for low numbers of youth attending education?

Could you explain the underlying causes for the factors you have mentioned?

The following questions focus on the impact of culture on education attendance.

What are the cultural practices that inhibit youth from attending education?

Could you explain how the cultural practices affect youth from attending education?

The following questions focus on the effects of the education and youth policies on education attendance and development.

What do you think are the effects of education policy on education attendance?

What do you think are the effects of youth policy on education attendance?

What do you think are the effects of youth policy on youth participation in national development?

The following questions focus on options for improving education attendance

What do you think should be done to improve the education attendance?

Why do you think the options you have suggested can work?

Do you have any other information which can help improve the education attendance?

Thank you for attending this interview.

APPENDIX C: VERNACULAR TRANSLATIONS

Name of language and source	Verbatim	English translation
Chichewa Focus group interviews with rural women Folder 30 00h 00m 00s- 00h 01m 01s	“Timaonera mavidiyo masana ndi usiku. Palibe otiletsa. Tiphunzira nthawi chani?”	“We watch videos during the day and night. Nobody stops us. What time can we attend education?”
Yao One-to-one interviews with male youth attending school in urban area Folder 47 00h 00m 00s- 00h 00m 043s	“Ulwere ukasasosa a chakongwe kuti achapadye, kuuga ugali. Ngaba a chalume iyai. Pa ulwere pana ya sukulu soni?”	“Taking care of the sick is the work of women as they wash and cook. This is not for men. When there is illness do you discuss education?”
Lomwe One-to-one interview with rural female parent Folder 141 00h 00m 00s- 00h 00m 58s	“Katina likhobiri, feteleza wa makopini ativakha iyayi. Kuhuthera ni makobiri.”	“We do not have money. We did not receive the subsidized fertilizer. Going to school needs money.”
Sena Focus group interviews with rural traditional leaders Folder 155 00h 00m 00s- 00h 01m 02s	“Mbwenye mchitidwe wakatangale ule ungasiyika, nyatwa zile aphale ambagumana nazo pamaphunjiro awo angachepe. Koma mwatchoka ndi atchogoleri onthowo omwe timawadalira kuti angatukule jiko yino ndiwo akuthawitsa pontho dinyerozo nakapanganazo malonda awo ndikuvereri namabanja awo.”	“Unless corruption is stopped, the problem of youth not attending education will continue. Unfortunately it is the leaders whom we trust to develop this country that are diverting funds for their business empires and luxury life for their families and friends.”

Tumbuka Focus groups interviews with rural in school youth Folder 263 00h 00m 00s- 00h 00m 54s	“Bakuteta kuti vipangizo vya banthu bakululemala vilipo ku sukulu”.	“It is not true that there are facilities for the disabled in our schools.”
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APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF ANALYTICAL MEMOS

The memos are evidence of female oppression.

1. A traditional leader while smoking his cigarette softly and smiled said emphatically:

‘Taking care of the sick demands the services of women and girls as they wash, cook. Women are for domestic chores. This is not for men. When there is illness, do you discuss education?’

2. Rural girls in school throwing their hands in the air emphatically and angrily complained that:

‘When going and coming from schools, older boys threaten us with unspecified punishments if we refuse to have sex with them’.

‘We also work up early in the morning to fetch water and wash plates. When back from school, we are always busy with domestic chores while our brothers are playing or studying. In the evenings, we fail to study as there are usually out door games and dances.’

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED RAW INTERVIEW DATA

Female urban youth in university

Folder 22/166

Time: 0h 00m 00s-0h 02m 07s (part of the transcription)

‘Coughs ... clears throat..... My opinion is that there are several reasons why youth do not attend school. There are some girls who fail to pay for their accommodation and end up cohabiting with boys in private homes. Some of these girls have ended up being pregnant while some get HIV.’

Rural male parent

Folder 28/166

Time: 0h 00m 00s- 0h 04m 42s (part of the transcription)

‘My opinion for the underlying reasons for low school attendance is eeeeeeeee..... Poverty is a more critical factor working against the opportunity for young people to attend secondary, college and university education. This is so because fees for these sectors of education are too exorbitant for most Malawian families, especially for rural families.’

APPENDIX F: MANUAL CODING SAMPLE

Female urban youth in university
Folder 22/166
Time: 0h 00m 00s-0h 02m 07s

'Coughs ... clears throat..... My opinion is that there are several reasons why youth do not attend school. (Some it's because of poverty, they cannot afford to buy notebooks and pens.... There are others that mhmhm..... Simply are not motivated to go to school. They have parents who provide the support needed but they have no motivation to attend school. They do not know what they want in life. Some fail because of disabilities as some parents keep their disabled children in houses and not let them mingle with other children. Some regard alcohol and drugs as way of life. This is what is adding to reasons for low attendance. Parents help... Theoretically, they are helping... But practically they are not. What I mean is that parents provide the support but the children refuse to attend school.'

Handwritten codes: Motivation, Disability, Poverty, Motivation, Drug and alcohol abuse, Motivation, School attendance

Rural male parent
Folder 28/166
Time: 0h 00m 00s-0h 04m 42s

'My opinion for the underlying reasons for low school attendance is several. There are too many issues eeeeeee.... (Our children are sent back from school because of we cannot afford to pay school rehabilitation funds. The schools say government has no money therefore we should contribute ... and ... What we know is that primary school is free... we are surprised because we hear that schools are allocated funds. Where does the money go?) They demand that we pay Mkw 500 every term and our children often come back from school and then stop as they get frustrated. The children are sometimes mocked by teachers because of we have failed to pay the money. We then also tell our children to remain in the homes. Let those who were educated be educated'

Handwritten codes: Poverty, School factor, School factor, School factor, Government factor, Family factor, School factor, Culture, Culture, Motivation

'It is not true that our culture inhibit our children from attending schools. Culture and education are different things. It is..... (pause..... that a child can fail to attend school because of culture, we divide the time for school and for receiving counsel. We normally have the children for counseling sessions in the villages during school holidays. It is a lie to say culture is prohibiting children from attending school.'

Handwritten codes: Culture, Culture, Motivation

'Aaaaaaa for the girls support, they are two things. Firstly today girls are supported with the influence of churches but the girls love sex with boys. They learn about sex in schools. Long time ago they learned from the cultural practices'

Handwritten codes: Girl Education, Culture, School factor, Family factor, Motivation

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF CODING

Name of code	Chunk of statement
Family factors	<p>They cannot afford to buy notebooks and pens because of poverty.</p> <p>Simply are not motivated to go to school.</p> <p>Our children are sent back from school because we cannot afford to pay school rehabilitation funds.</p>
School factors	<p>Some fail because of disabilities as some parents keep their disabled children in houses.</p> <p>Teachers ask us to memorise lessons instead of discussing.</p> <p>We sit on cold floors and it is uncomfortable.</p> <p>Teachers do not always attend classes.</p>
Motivation factors	<p>Simply are not motivated to go to school.</p> <p>Parents do not discuss our life aspirations..</p> <p>What I mean is that parents provide the support but the children refuse to attend school.</p> <p>Youth abuse alcohol and drugs to deal with frustrations.</p>
Cultural factors	<p>It is not true that our culture inhibit our children from attending school.</p> <p>Girls have to provide care for the sick.</p> <p>Traditional leaders are neglected by government.</p>
Governance factors	<p>Decentralisation is not supported by the central government.</p> <p>Corruption is the main cause of problems.</p> <p>Powerful and influential people are the people behind corruption.</p> <p>Politicisation of development programmes is the problem.</p>

APPENDIX H 1: PROCESS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES EMERGING FROM MAIN THEMES



APPENDIX H 2: PROCESS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES EMERGING



APPENDIX I: ETHICAL GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

1. The University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee has approved the research study.
2. Bera guidelines on ethics guided the conduct of the research.
3. Every respondent has given consent to participate in interviews.
4. Gate keepers are informed and provide consent for the participation of their subjects in the study.
5. Reasons for the research are clear to participants.
6. Permission is sought from respondents for note taking and recording of interviews.
7. Respondents are allowed to withdrawal from interviews when they decide to do so.
8. No names of respondents are written.
9. No pressure is subjected to respondents to provide information.
10. Participants have freely consented to be involved in verification of interpreted data.
11. Participants are allowed to ask questions for clarity.

APPENDIX J: PAST AND CURRENT STRATEGIC EDUCATION POLICY

OBJECTIVES

OLD POLICY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

EDUCATION SECTOR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN [TOWARDS QUALITY EDUCATION: IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN] 2009–2013

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1.2.2 Access and Equity

One of the three themes on which Malawi's NESP is founded relates' to access and equity to education, to ensure that the distribution and utilisation of resources and opportunities in education are fairly targeted to reach all members of society. As mentioned earlier, Malawi has a high population growth rate. Total population is estimated to increase by 20% between 2008 and 2018. This has huge implications for access to education in its own right and is

Compounded by the very high rate of repetition in the system.

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1.2.3 Quality and Relevance

The second theme identified' in the NESP *IE* SIP relates to quality and relevance, as targeted outcomes of the education sector. The focus here is on the quality of learning and its relevance, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency in the way education is delivered.

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1.2.4 Governance and Management

The third theme highlighted in the NESP IESIP is that of governance and management of the education system, to enable more effective and efficient delivery of services. The 2008/09 Malawi Education Country Status Report revealed that in 2007 as many as 42% of teachers in the primary education sub-sector were allocated randomly rather than according to the number of students enrolled in schools.

Current policy strategic action plan

MALAWI INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION – 2014–2019 STRATEGIC PLANS

Page 3

Strategic goals

1. Accessible, quality, relevant and inclusive education in Malawi
2. Good corporate governance and efficient management

APPENDIX K: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ONE RECOMMENDATION

Telephone: (265 1 788 444)
Fax : (265 1 788 218)
Communication should be addressed to:
The Principal Secretary



In reply please quote No.....

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS MANAGEMENT,
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT,
P.O. Box 30399,
LILONGWE 3.

Ref. No. OVP/PSRMD/52/1

14th August 2015

ADRA
Private Bag 951
Blantyre

Attention: Mr. Michael Usi

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR TIKUFERANJI PROGRAMME TO CARRY THE REFORMS AGENDA MESSAGE

I write on behalf of the office of the Vice President who is Chairman of the Public Sector Reforms Commission and Public Service Reforms Management Department.

As champions and coordinators of the Reform agenda in the Public Service, I wish to put a humble request to your office, Sir, to assist the Government of Malawi in its efforts to implement the Malawi Public Service Reforms Programme (MPSRP) which aims to bring efficiency and effectiveness to public service delivery.

In efforts to engage with the public on the reforms that are currently underway, a communication strategy was drawn and one of the activities is to propagate the reform message to the citizenry through television and radio programmes for them to understand their role in the reforms and to know what to expect from their government.

Tikuferanji is one of the noble, neutral and highly rated watched television programme that has helped many Malawians in so many areas of their lives not to mentioned that the programme has aided Malawians to articulate and understand issues of national development.

In this regard, it is for this reason that the Public Sector Reforms Management Department (PSRMD) sees it fit to make this request to your good office (ADRA) so that Tikuferanji Television Programme assists PSRMD to carry out this important national programme to the people of Malawi so that we can all embark on this journey together and achieve for the betterment of our loving Nation Malawi.

Yours faithfully

N.T. Mnthambala

SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS MANAGEMENT

**APPENDIX L: THE IMPACT OF UNDERLYING CAUSES FOR EDUCATION
ATTENDANCE ON FEMALES, MALES, RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

Underlying cause	Females	Males	Rural	Urban
Female primary education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Poor infrastructure	✓	✓	X	✓
Poor class management	✓	✓	X	✓
Insufficient teacher's training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pedagogy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inadequate learning materials	✓	✓	X	✓
Bullying	✓	x	X	✓
Curriculum irrelevance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Academic boycotts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Market and labour exploitation	✓	✓	X	✓
Overpopulation	✓	x	✓	✓
Diseases and death	✓	✓	✓	✓
Psychological support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Preschool counselling	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of nursery schools	✓	✓	X	✓
Gender bias	✓	x	X	✓
Community pressure and norms	✓	x	X	✓
Traditional beliefs and practice	✓	x	X	✓
Globalisation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community practices	✓	✓	X	✓

Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corruption	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decentralisation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	25	20	14	25

Total	Poor Policy Implementation	Decentralisation	Corruption	Politics	Globalisation	Traditional Beliefs and Practices	Lack of Nursery Schools	Lack of Support Services	Overpopulation	Trade and Labour Exploitation	Poverty	Academic Boycotts	Curriculum Irrelevance	Bullying	Inadequate Materials	Pedagogy	Demoralised Teacher	Insufficient Teacher Training	Poor Class Management	Poor Infrastructure	Free Primary Ed
TO-->																					
Trade and Labour Exploitation	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Overpopulation	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
Lack of Support Services	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of Nursery Schools	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Traditional Beliefs and Practices	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Globalisation	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Politics	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Corruption	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Decentralisation	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Poor Policy Implementation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
FROM	20	15	17	20	12	9	1	12	12	9	8	3	4	9	4	10	11	8	9	4	9

Key for terms used in the figure

Freeprim	= Free Primary Education
Poorinf	= Poor infrastructure
Poor class	= Poor Class Management
Insufftt	= Insufficient Teacher Training
Demoral	= Demoralisation (Motivation) Teacher
Pedagogy	= Pedagogy
Inadeqmat	= Inadequate Materials
Bullying	= Bullying
Curirrel	= Curriculum Irrelevance
Boycotts	= Academic Boycotts
Poverty	= Poverty
Labouexp	= Trade and Labour Exploitation
Overpop	= Overpopulation
Lacksupp	= Lack of Support Services
Lacknurs	= Lack of Nursery Schools
Tradbel	= Traditional beliefs (culture) and Practices
Global	= Globalisation
Politics	= Politics
Corrupt	= Corruption
Decentral	= Decentralisation
Poorpolicy	= Poor Policy Implementation